SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND REPORTING

REMOVING BARRIERS TO HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION- TECHNICAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2001

Alberta
LEARNING

ALBERTA LEARNING CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Alberta. Alberta Learning. System Improvement and Reporting.
Removing barriers to high school completion : technical report.

ISBN 0-7785-1321-1

1. Dropouts - Alberta - Prevention. 2. High school dropouts -
Alberta - Prevention. I. Title.

LC146.8.C2.A333 2001 371.93

For further information, contact

Alberta Learning
System Improvement and Reporting Division
Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2

Telephone (780) 422-8668
Toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000
Fax: (780) 422-8345
Email: sig@gov.ab.ca

This document is also available on the Alberta Learning website
www.learning.gov.ab.ca

This document is intended primarily for:
System and school administrators
Teachers and support staff
School board trustees
Post-secondary institutions academic upgrading staff and administration
At risk students
Alberta Learning managers

And may be of interest to:
Individuals interested in school improvement and improving high school completion rates

102-01996/

Copyright © 2001, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Learning. Permission is given by the copyright owner to reproduce this document for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary i

Introduction 1

Literature Review and Analysis of Alberta Data - Concepts of Early School Leaving 3

Factors associated with early school leaving 4

Characteristics of Alberta Early School Leavers 6

Scope of the problem 7

Solutions 9

Focus Group Consultations 11

In your experience, is early school leaving a problem? 12

What is being done currently… 13

What further can be done… 14

Resource Panel Input 20

The Strategic Plan – Removing Barriers 21

Key Themes and Suggested Outcomes 22

Appendix A – Analysis of Characteristics of School Leavers from the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) 33

Appendix B – Potential Attitude Assessment Instruments 46

Appendix C – Focus Group Details 47

Appendix D – Focus Group Coding Framework and Summary 48

Appendix E – Resource Panel Participants 83

Bibliography 84

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alberta Learning is committed to ensuring Albertans have the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and to learn quickly and flexibly throughout their lives. This process begins at an early age and reaches a key milestone when students complete high school and begin their adult lives by moving on to further education or employment. As such, the ability of every student to successfully complete high school is fundamental to continued success and quality of life.

The Barriers to High School Completion Coordinating Committee views the descriptor "dropout" as a negative term (Gilbert, et. al., 1993) that supports the view of the potential "dropout" as victim. As the literature review demonstrates, the causes of early school leaving are so complex and multi-faceted that a new, more comprehensive and holistic view of early school leaving is needed for the strategic plan to minimize barriers to high school completion.

An early school leaver is defined as any student who terminates his or her schooling prior to completing a recognized high school program or who does not directly continue their formal education in a post-secondary environment. This definition means completers include students who attain a high school diploma, a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED), or an Integrated Occupational Program Certificate. It includes "non-credentialed completers" and "matriculants." Non-credentialed completers begin a post-secondary program directly from high school without a diploma, but are accepted on the basis of their high school transcript. Matriculants are those who have a comparable academic program to those receiving an Alberta High School diploma, but without some of the formal diploma qualifications that do not apply to post-secondary entrance (i.e. CALM 20; Phys. Ed. 10).

Alberta Learning's 2000-2003 Business Plan has set a target for improving high school completion by 19 year old students from 70% to 75%. A key step to achieving this target has involved completing a study of barriers to high school completion, including gathering the input of 22 focus groups held across the province and identifying the critical outcomes highlighted below. Although this input was broadly based, these outcomes require further discussion with stakeholders to gauge the level of support for them and to consider optional strategies and implementation options.

Many of these outcomes have been suggested with the intent that they be included in Alberta Learning's three-year planning process and/or in the three-year plans developed by schools and institutions.

Highlights of suggested outcomes:

- **Enhancing early childhood development supports:** There is a growing appreciation that the early environment children grow up in powerfully shapes their future opportunities for success in school. Three specific outcomes to enhance early supports include:
  - Community agencies with mandates that include family supports work closely with school jurisdictions to promote and facilitate positive parenting that provides stimulating and nurturing home environments.
  - The education planning and reporting process leads to optimum community supports through partnerships with other government agencies and community supports.
  - There is a better understanding of the learning achievements needed by grade one students to promote success, and programs are adjusted to better develop these skills in pre-school children.

- **Listening to and supporting students:** Students at risk of leaving school early tend to be the most disenfranchised students in schools while coping with complex problems in their lives. Suggested outcomes include:
  - Through greater involvement in school-based decision-making, students have an increased sense of belonging and commitment to school life.
  - There are greater opportunities to support students in overcoming barriers to success through extra-curricular activities, mentoring programs, and recognition of students' successes.
  - School programs and curriculum provide greater and more consistent opportunities for students to identify issues and develop skills in managing peer conflict, anger management, family conflict, parenting skills, health, human sexuality, and drug abuse awareness.

- **Managing student alienation:** In support of initiatives like *Safe and Caring Schools*, routine assessments of students' affective experiences at school are recommended to help schools respond appropriately to identified needs. As a result of these periodic assessments, schools can then include strategies in their planning processes for building a more safe and caring school culture. Suggested outcomes include:
  - All students feel cared for and safe.
  - School staff and community actively promote a safe and caring school culture for students.

- **Increasing opportunities for success among Aboriginal students:** Although many of the suggested outcomes are designed to benefit all students, this report needs to be considered in relationship to the *First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Report* and *Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework* to identify additional strategies for increasing completion rates of Aboriginal students.

- **Increasing students' knowledge of self and the effects of labeling:** Adult students who had left school but returned to formal education later in life spoke about not knowing or understanding their levels of achievement or why they had struggled with their schooling. Others spoke of how labeling had damaged their self-confidence and ability to do well in school. Recommended outcomes for addressing these issues include:
  - Students and their parents have clear knowledge and understanding of the student's curricular achievement, ideal learning styles, and the student's affective experience of school.
    - New approaches to special education are in place that de-emphasize labels and emphasize diagnosis, counseling and program solutions to students' learning challenges.
    - Teachers have the necessary understandings of diagnostic results, teamwork skills, and cross-cultural sensitivities to meet the learning needs of at-risk students.
    - Teachers are provided with opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of their students' levels of achievement and learning styles, and incorporate these in their teaching methods and teamwork strategies.

- **Increasing program flexibility:** Rather than making the student fit the high school, one participant commented it's time to "make high school fit the student." Outcomes for increased flexibility include:
  - More Albertans have greater access to successfully complete high school courses.
  - Through greater choice, students have more relevant program options that better meet their needs.
  - Through a more seamless education system, adult students complete programs and receive a departmentally issued credential.

- **Enhancing cooperative education opportunities:** The perception that basic education favors academically-oriented students, received considerable validation in this study.
  Eighty-two per cent of the focus groups raised the concept of cooperative education and the need to make schooling more relevant for trades-oriented students by improving linkages between school and work. Suggested outcomes include:
  - Grade 9 curriculum includes an orientation towards the trades and other occupations.
  - Students' school life and work life are more closely linked.
  - Integrated Occupational Program students complete a high school diploma with greater opportunities to pursue career interests.

- **Tracking students:** Along with increasing program flexibility, an improved tracking system between secondary and post-secondary education will provide the ability to confirm what program supports are working and where resources might be better allocated over time. This tracking system is being implemented through a single student identifier.

- **Best Practices:** Program spending that helps students complete high school may potentially reduce future demands on social support programs. Program spending should support, enhance and strengthen successful stay-in-school strategies and initiatives by building on best practices.

INTRODUCTION

Completion of high school is an important objective for the individual and for society. This report outlines outcomes to achieve the target in Alberta Learning's Business Plan of improving the high school completion rate within 6 years of entering grade 9 from 70% to 75%.

The Barriers to High School Completion Project involved the following steps:

1. conducting a literature search on the causes and preventions of early school leaving;
2. analyzing and summarizing Alberta data and findings on school completion and early school leaving;
3. consulting with an advisory group of Albertans through 22 focus groups conducted throughout the province on the causes and solutions to early school leaving;
4. consulting with a panel of resource people with extensive experience and/or research background in barriers to high school completion;
5. writing a final report defining a strategic plan for the Ministry for improving on-time and longer-term high school completion rates.

The project was facilitated by a Coordinating Committee composed of Alberta Learning personnel and staff from the Departments of Justice, Children's Services, Human Resources and Employment and Community Development. The members of this committee included:

Alberta Learning	
Cheryl Sheldon	Special Programs, Basic Learning
Christine Drysdale	System Improvement and Reporting
Darlene Hayes	Zone 5 Services, Basic Learning
Dennis Theobald	System Improvement and Reporting
Ed Kozakewich	Learning Support and Accountability, Adult Learning
Gary Weber	Library Services, Information and Strategic Services
Gerard Bissonnette	French Language Services, Basic Learning
Guy Germain	Educational Information Services, Information and Strategic Services
John Blevins	Governance and Program Delivery, Basic Learning
John Burger, Chair	System Improvement and Reporting
Loraine Steele	Zone 4 Services, Basic Learning
Mark Douglas	Industry Programs and Services, Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Mike Alpern	Curriculum, Basic Learning
Pat Ehman	Performance Measurement and Reporting, System Improvement and Reporting
Sandy Bellan	Policy, Information and Strategic Services
Sharon Sands	Board Support and Business Integration, Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Human Resources and Employment	
Anne Westervelt	Labour Market and Income Support Programs and Services, Program Design
Justice	
Stan Pede	Edmonton South Probation Office

Children's Services

Cynthia Farmer	Special Programs, Partnership Development

Community Development

Andrew Curran	Community Development Officer, Volunteer Services Branch

The review of the Report, subsequent follow-up work and the development of an implementation plan was facilitated by a committee composed of Alberta Learning staff. The members of this committee included:

Amelia Turnbull	National and International Education, Information and Strategic Services
Josepha Vanderstoop	Communications
Carol Arnold-Schutta	Community Programs, Adult Learning
Brenda Davis	Legislative Services
Valerie Keates	Governance and Program Delivery, Basic Learning
Maureen Gough	Professional Development and Certification, Basic Learning
Gerard Bissonnette	French Language Services, Basic Learning
Gerry Waisman	Learner Assistance, Adult Learning
Gina Vivone-Vernon	Learning and Teaching Resources, Basic Learning
Ken Robertson	Zone 5, Basic Learning
Lori Cresey	Fiscal Management and Accountability, Corporate Services
Lynn Edwards	Field Services, Basic Learning
Merla Bolender, chair	Zone 1, Basic Learning
Tom Walton	Alberta Children and Youth Initiative, Basic Learning
Evelyn Good Striker	Aboriginal Services, Basic Learning
John Burger	System Improvement and Reporting
Elaine Solez	Performance Measurement & Reporting
Sharon Campbell	Performance Measurement & Reporting
Michael Walter	Zone 6, Basic Learning
Mark Douglas	Apprenticeship and Industry Training
Jim Brackenbury	Learner Assessment, SIR
Raja Panwar	Curriculum, Basic Learning

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF ALBERTA DATA - CONCEPTS OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

A number of researchers (Dorn, 1996; Levin, 1992; Tanner, Krahn and Hartnagel, 1995) suggest that because dropping out is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes existing in several different domains, early school leaver prevention programs must be holistic and broadly based.

This approach is made even more imperative by the recent (AECD, 1993; Gilbert, 1993) recognition that early school leaving is a process – not an event – typically a long process of gradual disengagement (Tanner, Krahn and Hartnagel, 1995; Alexander, et. al., 1997; Mirochnik and McCaul, 1990).

A successful strategic plan will need to be based on theories of what supports students require and that counteract the multiple causes of early school leaving (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1994). McPartland (1993) shows that historically, activities designed to prevent early school leaving are not up to the task, because the interventions are not basic or intense enough to counteract the multiple primary causes of early school leaving. Much broader reforms are needed that change the strategies from controlling and sorting students to a new emphasis on holistic support structures and processes, involving business, the community, parents, educators, and students (Radwanski, 1987).

Levin (1992) observes that "In Canada, there has been considerable attention paid to the issue of high school dropout rates. Measures taken have primarily tried to prevent dropouts by providing alternative programs, or more counseling and supports. Most efforts replicate existing school structures and processes."

An alternative solution, Levin (1992) suggests, would require systemic change based on the concept of "second chance." Many of these solutions are drawn from adult education and involve more flexible approaches to organization, instruction and credentialing. The barriers to such changes are significant and require rethinking of longstanding ideas about what education is and how it should be delivered.

It seems clear that efforts to counteract negative and defensive world-views held by students at risk of leaving school should be refocused. The implication of this research raises questions of how society can best support the individual learner. Such supports, in addition to being more holistic than past strategies, will need to be constructed in ways that help students achieve success within an environment that is relevant, practical and more controlled by the students themselves.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Student-centered, school-related and community/environmental factors associated with early school leaving are not separate, but rather can coexist and interact in myriad ways causing early school leaving. In addition, these factors are often influenced by broader socio-economic realities that influence students, families and school systems (Franklin and Streeter, 1995).

Early school leavers often describe their personal and social lives as being very difficult before they left school, and often express these difficulties and a dislike for school as reasons for leaving. Many often feel that adults in their lives did not help them to stay in school (Britt, 1995).

Ironically, despite the negative feelings early school leavers frequently attribute to their schools, many early school leavers remain committed to the value of education and intend on returning to school one day if the required supports are available. Furthermore, students who have left school often come to see the education system as the future solution to their employability needs; however, early school leavers are quick to criticize the restrictive, authoritarian, juvenile environment within typical high schools (Tanner, Krahn and Hartnagel, 1995).

Students often view their decision to leave school as rational in terms of their perceptions of the relative payoffs and personal costs of educational attainment. Successful support strategies must recognize this apparent rationality and offer equal or more rational/compelling alternatives.

It is important to emphasize that early school leaving is a process – not an event – typically a long process of gradual disengagement. The factors that are associated with early school leaving have been heavily researched and compiled in a number of references (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994; Alexander, et.al., 1997; Barington and Hendricks, 1989; Britt, 1995; Franklin and Streeter, 1995; Gilbert, et.al., 1993; Karp, 1988; Radwanski, 1987; Romanik and Blazer, 1990; Welch, 1998). These factors typically include the following:

STUDENT-RELATED FACTORS:

Student's perceptions of irrelevance of education to their future
Physical and sensory disorders
Developmental and learning disorders
Temperament and behavioral disorders
Alienation – with overall impact that the student does not feel cared for or cared about
  -Powerlessness – lack of control over immediate environment or future
  -Self estrangement – lack of self-esteem
  -Isolation – lack of sociability
  -Meaninglessness – lack of control over long-term environment or future
  -Normlessness – belief that socially unacceptable behavior is ok, i.e. misbehavior

STUDENT-RELATED FACTORS (CON'T):

Social immaturity
Lack of occupational aspirations
Low level of extracurricular participation
Negative peer influences
Minority ethnic background – English as a second language needs
Non-involvement in labour force
Male gender
Early pregnancy
Low ability level
History of low achievement

SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS:

Negative teacher-student dynamics
Inadequate teacher education-inservice
Student feelings of being at-risk i.e. unsafe or victim of ridicule
High teacher turnover
Teaching methods poorly matched to learning styles – frustrated learner
Teachers hold low expectations for student
Lack of program/school choice or student awareness of same

SCHOOL – COMMUNITY – STUDENT FACTORS:

Long bus rides
Scare tactics (forecasting lifetime of "bad" jobs for early leavers may backfire)
Family and welfare issues
Weak family supports, family dysfunction, and social isolation
Family income below recognized poverty level
Low parental education level(s)
Transient – move frequently
Over work – i.e. greater than 15-20 part-time employment hours per week.
Favorable labour force opportunities

Although identifying factors associated with early school leaving can assist in understanding the processes linked to leaving school, a potential drawback of such lists is they can lead to a cookbook or checklist approach to problem solving. Such approaches can easily lead to fragmented programs which have little chance of providing the kind of integrated, holistic strategies that are necessary to provide effective solutions. Lists of factors may also suggest causality when a direct causal relationship does not exist.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ALBERTA EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

An analysis of Alberta students was completed primarily based on data in the student information system. This analysis (excluding Graduate Equivalent Diplomas)[1] included students beginning grade 10 in 1994 or 1995. Factors associated with early school leaving include: male gender, Aboriginal ancestry, and enrollment in special programs including English as a second language, special education, home education or the Integrated Occupational Program. Students associated with French immersion programs had a lower rate of leaving school early.

An analysis was undertaken to test the hypothesis that students completing 14 and 24 stream courses are more likely to leave high school because of the lack of 34 level courses. A total of 4,248 students from an original cohort passed Math 14 and 24, and Science 14 and 24. Of these students, only 35.5% went on to become completers, while 55.8% of the entire cohort were on-time completers. Although there are many other factors that influence the decision to leave school early, there seems to be some initial evidence that designing 34 level courses or providing more opportunities for cooperative education may encourage these students to complete high school.

This analysis also demonstrated that there was no relationship between size of school or whether the school was urban or rural and completion status of students. It was noted that early school leavers, on average, earn 51 high school credits before they leave high school. The complete *Analysis of Characteristics of School Leavers from the Corporate Data Warehouse* is found in *Appendix A*.

---

[1] In 1993/1994 8.1% of diplomas/certificates awarded were Equivalency Diplomas; in 1994/1995 7.6% of diplomas/certificates awarded were Equivalency Diplomas

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

High school completion for a number of students occurs over a period of years well into adulthood. The data presented in the table below speaks to the importance of longitudinal modeling of the processes and solutions to early school leaving. As the 1981 to 1996 census data indicate, there are substantial gains made in the percentage of high school graduates between the ages of 19 and 24 and from 25 to 29, although at a reduced rate in the latter category.

Percentage of Population (Age 17 – 29) with at Least High School Completion, Alberta and Canada; 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996

	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29+
1996:													
Alberta	15.6	48.5	**68.0**	73.7	77.1	77.2	79.7	**80.2**	80.4	80.3	80.5	80.8	[illegible]
Canada	23.0	51.3	**71.6**	78.3	81.1	82.0	82.5	**82.4**	82.7	82.3	82.3	82.2	**82.1**
1991:													
Alberta	21.0	51.8	**67.3**	72.5	75.3	76.4	77.0	[illegible]	77.5	76.0	76.4	74.7	[illegible]
Canada	25.9	53.0	**70.8**	76.5	78.3	79.7	79.8	**79.7**	79.6	79.1	78.4	77.5	**77.0**
1986:													
Alberta	19.5	47.5	**63.6**	68.0	69.3	70.4	69.5	[illegible]	70.5	71.0	72.1	72.7	**73.8**
Canada	25.2	51.7	**67.9**	72.5	73.5	73.1	72.7	**72.5**	71.9	71.5	71.6	71.3	**71.4**
1981:													
Alberta	20.3	46.7	[illegible]	63.3	66.9	68.2	69.7	**72.1**	72.6	73.3	74.9	76.1	**76.1**
Canada	27.0	51.3	**64.7**	67.7	68.9	69.1	69.6	**70.1**	70.5	71.5	72.4	73.3	**73.2**

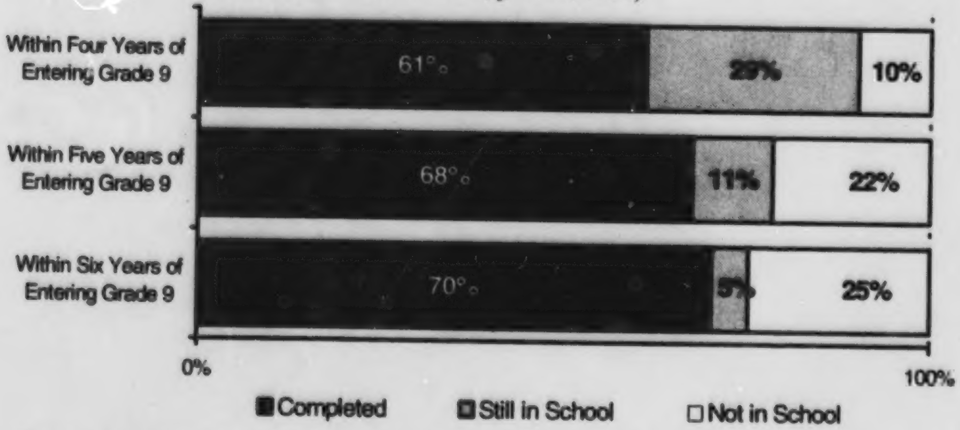
Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 1981 – 1996 (Special Tabulation).

Notes: Results are based on samples of approximately 20% of the population. Approximate sample sizes per age: Canada: 105,000; Alberta: 9,100. Approximate margin of error (at .95 confidence level): Canada: ±0.1%; Alberta: ±1.0%.

Diagonally highlighted cells demonstrate completion by age over time in the same cohort.

Alberta high school students 19 years of age or younger also demonstrate a considerable variation in the time required to earn a diploma, as the chart below demonstrates.

Percentage of Alberta Students Entering Grade 9 in 1993/1994 Who Completed High School within Four, Five and Six Years (by 1997/1998)



Source: Alberta Learning, Performance Measurement and Reporting Branch (based on analysis of Alberta Learning's Student Records System).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

High school completion for a number of students occurs over a period of years well into adulthood. The data presented in the table below speaks to the importance of longitudinal modeling of the processes and solutions to early school leaving. As the 1981 to 1996 census data indicate, there are substantial gains made in the percentage of high school graduates between the ages of 19 and 24 and from 25 to 29, although at a reduced rate in the latter category.

Percentage of Population Age 17 – 29 Years with High School Completion, Alberta and Canada: 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996

Age →	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
1996:													
Alberta	15.6	48.5	**68.0**	73.7	77.1	77.2	79.7	**80.2**	80.4	80.3	80.5	80.8	**80.8**
Canada	23.0	51.3	**71.6**	78.3	81.1	82.0	82.5	**82.4**	82.7	82.3	82.3	82.2	**82.1**
1991:													
Alberta	21.0	51.8	**67.3**	72.5	75.3	76.4	77.0	**77.1**	77.5	76.0	76.4	74.7	**75.5**
Canada	25.9	53.0	**70.8**	76.5	78.3	79.7	79.8	**79.7**	79.6	79.1	78.4	77.5	**77.0**
1986:													
Alberta	19.5	47.5	**63.6**	68.0	69.3	70.4	69.5	**70.4**	70.5	71.0	72.1	72.7	**73.8**
Canada	25.2	51.7	**67.9**	72.5	73.5	73.1	72.7	**72.5**	71.9	71.5	71.6	71.3	**71.4**
1981:													
Alberta	20.3	46.7	**59.8**	63.3	66.9	68.2	69.7	**72.1**	72.6	73.3	74.9	76.1	**76.1**
Canada	27.0	51.3	**64.7**	67.7	68.9	69.1	69.6	**70.1**	70.5	71.5	72.4	73.3	**73.2**

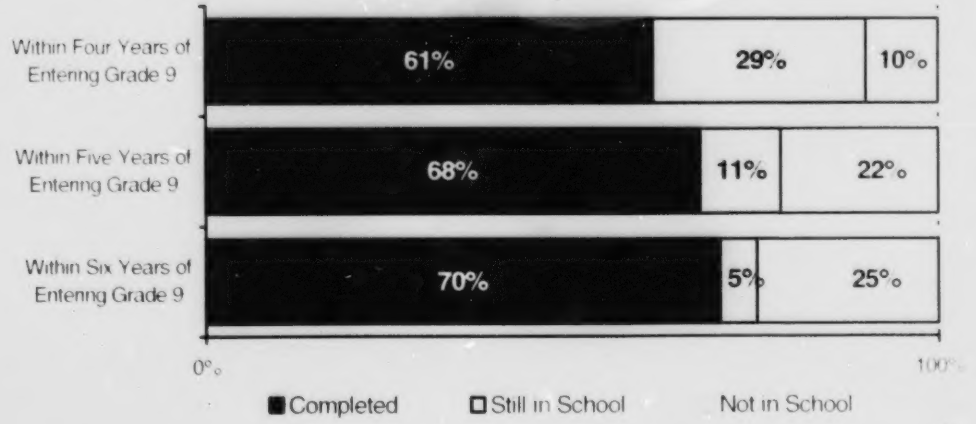
Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1981 - 1996 [illegible]

Notes: [illegible]

[illegible]

Alberta high school students 19 years of age or younger also demonstrate a considerable variation in the time required to earn a diploma, as the chart below demonstrates.

Percentage of Alberta Students Entering Grade 9 in 1993-1994 Who Completed High School Within Four, Five and Six Years (1997-1998)



Source: Alberta Learning, Performance Measurement and Reporting Branch [illegible]

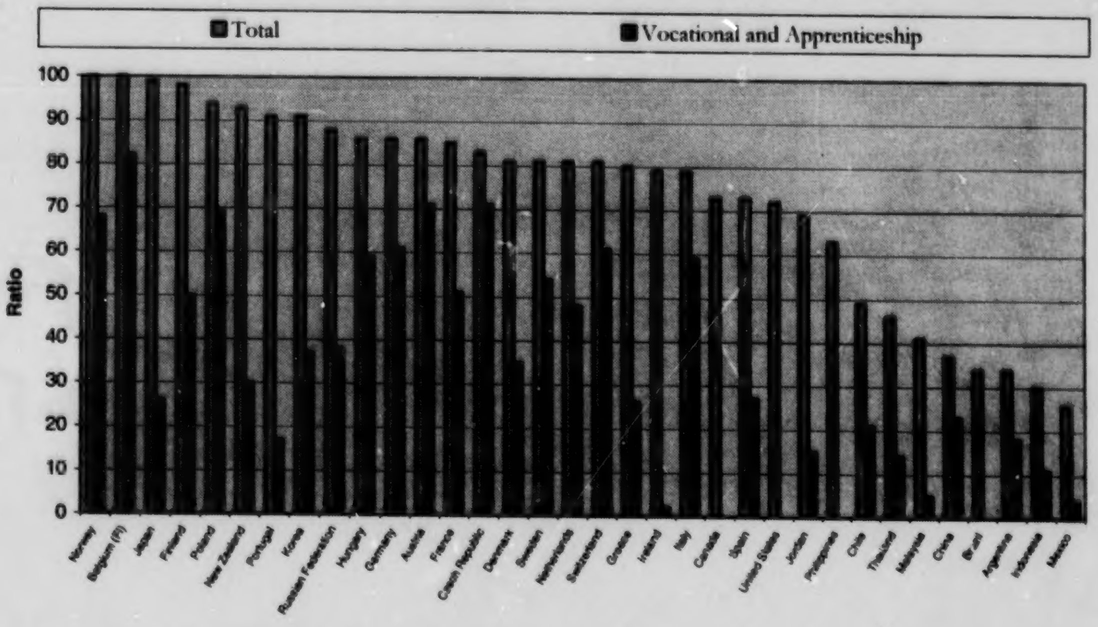
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The Aboriginal population has historically experienced higher early school leaving rates compared to the general population. StatsCan data (Galt, 2000) indicate that the percentage of early school leavers in the Aboriginal population remains unacceptably high. In 1996, 45% of Canadian Aboriginal people aged 20-29 had not completed high school.

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
Less than HS	45%	17%
HS diploma	32%	36%
College/trade	20%	28%
University	4%	19%

In the broader, global context, Canadian high school completion compares favorably with completion rates in the United States, but not as well when compared to other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, some of which achieve completion rates of 100%. Although there is variation in the structure and length of upper secondary programs between countries, the fact that some countries do achieve very high completion rates suggests that increasing the completion target in Alberta over time is not only reasonable but necessary in the face of global competition. By achieving improved high school completion rates, a significant contribution would be made to making Alberta an attractive place to invest because of its world class labour force. The following chart demonstrates Canada's current position compared to the OECD countries.

Ratio of upper secondary graduates to population at typical age of graduation, by type of programme - 1996*
First educational programmes (OECD, 1998)



**** Upper secondary level of education (ISCED 3)***
Coverage at the upper secondary level corresponds to ISCED 3. This level consists of 2 to 5 years of schooling. Admission into educational programmes at the upper secondary level requires the completion of the lower secondary level of education, or a combination of basic education and vocational experience that demonstrates an ability to handle the subject matter. Upper secondary education may either be terminal (*i.e.* preparing the students for entry directly into working life) or preparatory (*i.e.* preparing students for tertiary education). ISCED stands for the International Standard Classification of Education of 1976.

SOLUTIONS

While improving high school completion is a complex problem, the following solutions from the literature are presented to stimulate thinking on what a more holistic support model might look like (Bloom, 1991).

PREVENTION – TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

1. Early intervention strategies to ensure development of strong basic academic skills
2. Alternative schools/programs for basic skill development
3. Instructional technologies, supplemented by tutoring
4. Individualized programs, learning styles, multiple intelligences
5. Conflict resolution/counseling supports
6. Mentoring/tutoring programs
7. Strategies that reinforce caring student-staff relationships
8. Enhanced social supports for remaining in school – creating new primary social support groups
9. Attitude assessments to identify and diagnose at-risk students and/or alienation and early school leaving probability – use of student attitude profiles in some studies have predicted between

52% - 85% of early school leavers (Romanik and Blazer, 1990; Barrington and Hendricks, 1989). See Appendix B.

INTERVENTION – TO ENHANCE PERSONAL, SOCIAL/FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

1. Programs to stimulate and maintain parental interest and involvement in their child(ren)'s education
2. Effective schools (healthy organizational culture)
3. Children's Services Regions and Health Authorities work closely with school boards and prioritize, as part of their mandate, the provision of supports to students at-risk of leaving school early.

TRANSITION STRATEGIES – TO IMPROVE CAREER PREPARATION, JOB TRAINING AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION

1. Alternative programs/schools: e.g. school board - post-secondary institution partnerships
2. School to work transition strategies
3. School-business partnerships
4. Moderate work hours (less than 15-20) are associated with reduced risk of early school leaving
5. Multiple avenues for students to return – program choice empowers students
6. Recognition of prior learning.

OTHER RENEWAL STRATEGIES

1. Teacher Education/Professional development
2. Strike a balance between the social and economic dimensions of staying in school
3. Community linkages
4. Accurate student tracking system.

Reforms are needed that give students greater incentives to stay in school and encourage greater parental school involvement. However, many causes are not school-related and may not have school-based solutions, thus pointing to the need for long-term solutions that provide for more seamless transitions from the basic to the adult learning systems so that programs are available when the student has "healed" sufficiently to access them (Lawton, et.al., 1988).

Twenty-two focus groups were conducted throughout Alberta, involving over 210 students, parents, teachers, school and central office administrators and community members. The focus groups were designed to capture specific sub-groups including: members of the Aboriginal community; school jurisdiction staff and clients; students involved with the criminal justice system and their parents; adult learners who had previously left school early and were taking academic upgrading; and staff at post-secondary institutions specializing in academic upgrading. The complete list of focus groups and categories of participants is detailed in Appendix C.

Focus groups were designed to include from 6 to 12 participants in order to provide the opportunity for intensive dialogue around four key questions. The quality of discussion at the focus groups was exceptional, reflecting high levels of interest in the project among focus group participants. The four questions addressed by the focus groups were designed to help define where we are now and where we want to be in relationship to removing barriers to high school completion. The specific questions addressed to the focus groups were:

1. In your experience, is early school leaving a problem?
2. What is being done currently in your community that is helping students complete high school on time (by 19 years of age) or as adults?
3. What further can be done, and by whom, to improve high school completion on time (by 19 years of age) or as adults?
4. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improving high school completion rates?

Focus group facilitators and observers/note takers were provided from the project coordinating committee. The Ministry of Community Development also cooperated with the project by providing highly trained facilitators in a number of focus group locations. An objective of this approach to focus group administration was to ensure a high degree of involvement and awareness of the focus group input by the project coordinating committee while also ensuring objectivity through the Community Development facilitators.

Analysis

Notes of the discussions at each focus group were shared with the local focus group coordinator to ensure accuracy. These notes were then coded to define the patterns in the dialogue and the frequencies of these patterns between the focus groups. The coding framework was based on the five general categories of 1) community, 2) funding, 3) program, 4) staff and 5) students. Within these five general categories emerged more specific sub-themes from the analysis of focus group notes. These sub-themes are defined in Appendix D followed by the complete content analysis of focus group input. The analysis of the frequency patterns of the sub-themes between the 22 focus groups is summarized below.

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, IS EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING A PROBLEM?

Focus group participants were asked this question as an introductory question to explore their personal experience with the issue of early school leaving. In response to the question, 31 participants in 13 groups most frequently talked about students' emotional or affective relationship to school being characterized by isolation, feelings of low self-esteem or being disconnected from the social fabric of the school. Eight other student-related sub-themes were raised in five to two groups. Dominant among these were the observations that, too often, at-risk students do not have an accurate understanding of their own levels of curricular achievement. Less frequent observations were made about the lack of career planning and other supports to offset the disadvantages at-risk students face, and the attraction that remunerative work holds for many students, especially when the economy is strong.

Program Issues

Program matters across a broad range of sub-themes emerged as a powerful set of observations. A total of 52 comments were raised in 12 groups across the nine program-related sub-themes. Dominant among these issues were observations by nine focus groups about the lack of program flexibility for students and a system of education that does not offer students learning opportunities congruent with their learning styles or needs. There were observations in eight groups about the challenge that transition from junior to senior high presents for students. Grade 9 was described as a critical phase for students where the curriculum is set up for the university-bound route, leaving trades-oriented students with a far less relevant program. Comments were made in five focus groups about an overall lack of program relevance for students, especially if students were not academically oriented. Several participants spoke about the importance of student attitude and basic learning skills development occurring in the early years of life and how there is too little attention being paid to this. Several groups suggested the Career and Technology Studies curriculum, while a good program, is not sufficiently linked to students' career interests or aptitudes. Related to the issue of program flexibility, three groups talked about the lack of flexibility in the times that students may access education programs. In a focus group in Lethbridge, participants said they do not call early school leavers "drop-outs" but instead, "stop-outs" to reinforce the idea that students have the flexibility to return when they are ready.

Community-Family Issues

There were 21 comments relating to community-family issues. Many observations were of students struggling with inter-generational patterns of low education success, or low family income levels negatively affecting students' chances for success. A related point was the importance of effective school-home communications and the observation that, all too often, this is lacking for students at-risk of early school leaving.

Staff Issues

Sixteen staff-related comments were made by five focus groups. The most frequent addressed the observation that schools are not always caring or welcoming places. For example, one participant commented that, "Once students have dropped out, schools tend to not want them back." Another commented that "Schools need to recognize the importance of all individual students." Related to the caring theme were comments that schools can "over-label" students and that staff expectations for students' success or failure have powerful impacts on students. Several participants called for stronger accountability or professional development to ensure teachers are responsive to students' needs.

WHAT IS BEING DONE CURRENTLY IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT IS HELPING STUDENTS COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL ON TIME (BY 19 YEARS OF AGE) OR AS ADULTS?

The intent of this question was to identify current actions or ideas that were seen by focus group participants to be helping improve high school completion rates. As with question one, the focus group input underwent content analysis to isolate substantive comments which were coded according to the general categories and sub-themes listed in Appendix D. Coded input was then organized by frequency and by focus group. This analysis is summarized below.

Program Issues

Focus group participants most frequently spoke about program-related interventions or supports involving eight sub-themes being provided to help students achieve success in school. Flexible programming was most often cited, whereby greater program choice, individualization or access options were being provided to make school more accessible to students. Related to the flexibility theme, five groups noted the effectiveness of the Outreach programs for students. Several groups talked about the value of industry partnership through cooperative education models, such as the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) or the Green Certificate program, in providing more meaningful programs to at-risk students. Less frequently cited were program adaptations that provided additional affective supports to students, early development of literacy skills, and a grade 9/10 math transition course to improve students' achievement.

Student Supports

The second most frequent category of interventions was student supports. Assistance with career planning and awareness was the most often cited support, raised in eight focus groups. Other student supports identified included tutoring and teacher-aide assistance. Five groups spoke about affective supports for students, including keeping students focused through athletics, building support networks in schools, emphasizing friendliness, and recognition and reward programs for student successes. Improving students' self-knowledge of their reading levels was stressed by one focus group.

Staff Interventions

The third most frequently discussed category involved staff interventions. Most commonly cited in seven focus groups were conscious attempts to demonstrate caring relationships with students through teacher advisor programs, emphasizing respect, attendance contracts and other means to demonstrate to students that the staff and adult community cared about the students. Other staff interventions focused on coordinating with community support personnel such as social services, police and health authorities. Identification and diagnosis of at-risk students by staff was noted by three focus groups. Two groups noted how powerful staff expectations of students were in influencing the students' learning, and one group talked about teacher resource groups providing professional development support to teachers in the area of working with at-risk students.

Community Supports

The fourth category centered on community and involved the sub-theme of mentors discussed by five focus groups. One participant stated:

> "The school uses a holistic approach of the circle to give students an opportunity to speak as an individual about the issues and to share good experiences with the group. If there is a crisis, there are resource people who are brought into the school to intervene and assist the student to overcome the obstacles."

The importance of community partnerships was discussed by five focus groups that noted the value of linkages with business, elders, and social services. Other community-based interventions identified by three focus groups included specific work with parents through home visits or liaison staff.

Funding Issues

A few focus groups spoke about the strategic use of funding to reduce class size for at-risk students or the important uses being made of high needs funding. Student finance grants to adult learners was also cited as providing critical support to adult students.

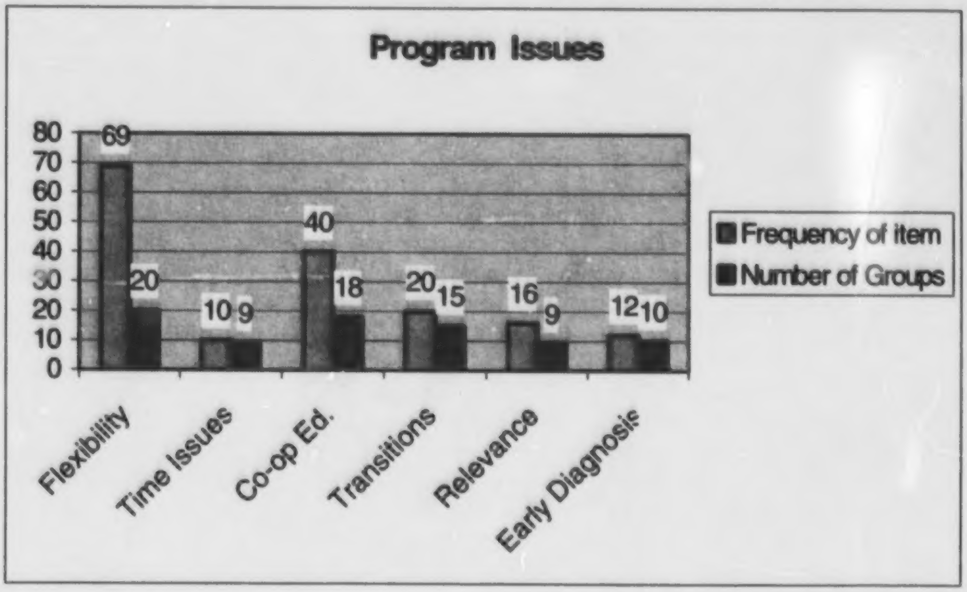
WHAT FURTHER CAN BE DONE, AND BY WHOM, TO IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION ON TIME OR AS ADULTS?

The intent of the third question was to identify where we need to go in removing barriers by talking about new actions or ideas to help improve high school completion rates. As with questions one and two, the focus group input was content analyzed to isolate substantive comments that were coded according to general categories and sub-themes described in Appendix D. Coded input was then organized by frequency and then by focus group. Question three, in conjunction with a final question designed to capture any final comments by focus group participants, generated by far the most input with over 500 observations or comments identified. This analysis is summarized below.

Program Issues

Program was the dominant category of commentary involving 6 major sub-themes. The most frequent sub-theme raised in 20 focus groups was a call for improved program flexibility for students. Typical among these comments were:

- Schools should recognize students' strengths and interests and work from these points.
- Schools should be more flexible and student-focused.
- Tailor courses to needs/competencies… of the students.
- Need to build on the person's strengths.
- It's time to paint the car a different color, i.e. make high school fit the student, not the student fit the high school.
- Alberta Learning career development (CTS) courses are on the right track, but they must be modifiable.
- All situations are not equal, i.e. some kids need more space, time and support.
- The idea of 'excellence' should be doing your best and meeting your own objectives and your potential.
- Need to be flexible on the entry points for coming back to school because in their lives students may need to leave school for awhile.
- Need to do a better job in ensuring that students with special needs understand how they best can learn – career portfolios.



Program flexibility also extended to time issues. Nine focus groups identified this sub-theme with several noting that some schools start too early for the "growth stage" of teenagers. Start times of 9:00 or 9:30 were recommended. Others called for more flexible timetables or time to complete courses as ways to make programs more flexible for students. Four focus groups called for expanded support for Outreach programs as a model of program flexibility that is working for many students.

Closely related to program flexibility were observations in 18 focus groups regarding the need for improved linkages between program and cooperative education. The traditional high school curriculum was often seen as too focused on university preparation. Consequently, career preparation in the trades was not seen as being sufficiently tailored to students' learning styles, learning strengths or optimal career options. Career and Technology Studies and Registered Apprenticeship Programs were widely supported, but there were compelling calls for extending these efforts through better articulation with technical institutes and with the work place while at the same time linking more fundamentally with the individual student's abilities, interests and needs.

Program transitions from junior high to high school and from high school to post-secondary study were suggested by 15 focus groups as deserving attention. Grade 9 was described as a crunch point for many students with too few program options being available, especially for the vocationally oriented students. Also, several groups suggested the transitions to post-secondary study should begin to receive attention as early as grade 7 to ease this process. Better links and partnerships between post-secondary institutions and high schools were suggested to address this need.

Program relevance was a sub-theme identified in nine focus groups that spoke of the need to adapt the curriculum to the learning styles of Aboriginal people and the value of ensuring that teaching methods match students interests and learning styles.

The last major sub-theme in the program category, noted by 10 focus groups, was the wisdom of putting an even greater emphasis on the early diagnosis of learning disabilities and the provision of literacy supports as early as possible.

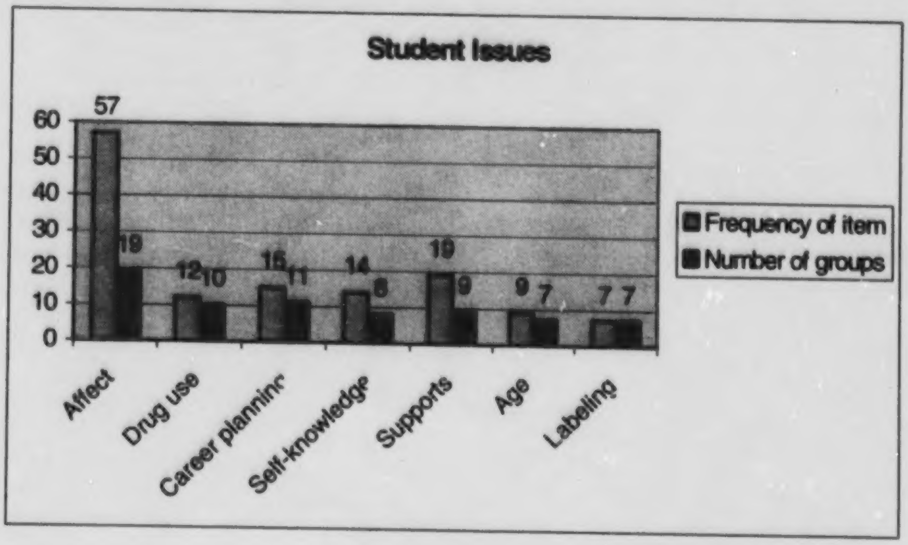
Although identified by only four focus groups, several comments about the Integrated Occupational Program (IOP) warrant specific emphasis given the strength of conviction by the proponents of change to this program. Essentially, the perspective presented is that IOP is too often a "dumping ground" for students with learning disabilities. One participant commented that IOP results in "… students getting lost in the middle – on the one hand they can't go on to post-secondary, yet they can't really go into the trades route." There were also concerns about labeling students with low expectations once placed in IOP. The cooperative education model and diploma programs based on building on students' multiple intelligence were seen as potential alternative approaches to IOP.

Minor sub-themes included the suggestion to make the Career and Life Management (CALM) course available earlier to students and, in doing this, perhaps making it more effective for students; and implementing Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) models into secondary education.

Student Issues

The second most frequent category involved student issues. Nineteen focus groups reflecting 57 comments or observations dealt with the sub-theme of students' affective experience of school. One high school student, who had dropped out but returned, stated that "Early school leavers are shadows of learning disabilities." Another participant noted that students drop out incrementally, course by course. More personal approaches to interacting with students were suggested as a way of making schools less alienating to students. Extra-curricular involvement of students was frequently cited as an important way of connecting students to the life of the school. At-risk students were also described as often being involved in power struggles with other students as a means to improve their status and self-esteem. Consequently peer relationships among early school leavers are frequently negative. Instead of providing peer support networks among early school leavers, cliques and group conflict sometimes emerge. A better model of peer relating with more supports for peer relationships was called for.

Other student affect issues included the negative impact long bus rides have on students in rural areas, the need for stress management supports for students, and the need to provide for more student involvement and decision making in their school lives. Student dress was raised as an exclusionary factor among students, but standard dress or school uniforms received variable levels of support. Periodic assessment of student attitudes was sometimes supported by focus groups as one way to monitor and respond to students' affective needs.



Closely related to the sub-theme of student affect was the sub-theme of students' use of illegal drugs or alcohol. Ten focus groups raised this issue, highlighting a relatively common concern that drugs or alcohol seem to be easier to get at an earlier age.

The need for better support to students for career planning was identified in 11 focus groups. Specific suggestions were for elementary teachers to be more "career aware" and that, generally, students need earlier and more intensive career planning supports. Career portfolios were suggested as a potentially useful tool.

Eight focus groups spoke of students not acquiring foundational academic skills because, too often, students are given "social passes" when they had not learned the curriculum for their grade level. Related to this concern was the perceived need for better parent and student self-knowledge of curricular achievement.

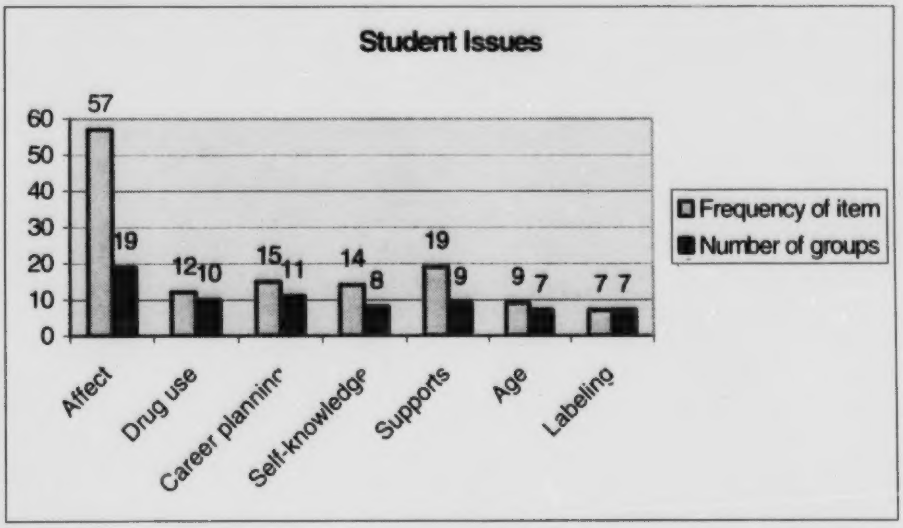
When students are experiencing multiple problems such as poverty, family dysfunction, pregnancy, health issues, etc., the need for coordinated and multiple supports was noted by nine focus groups. Specific suggestions were made for increased student involvement in extra-curricular activities, for more Aboriginal counselors, and for integrated support systems based on improved coordination of inter-agency services.

Seven groups talked about the sub-theme of students' age, asking "How do we keep kids who may not be quite finished at 19." The suggestion was made that we need to change the picture of school to a life long approach, providing both more formalized and supported exit and re-entry points in the secondary education system.

Seven groups also discussed the negative impact that labeling has on students. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with counseling and the perception of labeling and streaming for lower achieving students, suggesting that perhaps greater communication is needed instead. An Aboriginal participant stated that psychological assessment tools need to be changed as they are not geared toward Native culture. Another participant stated that high school kids have started to leave 'in their heads' as far back as elementary school because of labeling.

The remaining student sub-themes involved calls for better student tracking systems, by five focus groups, and noted the powerful attraction work has for students especially when the economy is buoyant.

attitudes was sometimes supported by focus groups as one way to monitor and respond to students' affective needs.



Closely related to the sub-theme of student affect was the sub-theme of students' use of illegal drugs or alcohol. Ten focus groups raised this issue, highlighting a relatively common concern that drugs or alcohol seem to be easier to get at an earlier age.

The need for better support to students for career planning was identified in 11 focus groups. Specific suggestions were for elementary teachers to be more "career aware" and that, generally, students need earlier and more intensive career planning supports. Career portfolios were suggested as a potentially useful tool.

Eight focus groups spoke of students not acquiring foundational academic skills because, too often, students are given "social passes" when they had not learned the curriculum for their grade level. Related to this concern was the perceived need for better parent and student self-knowledge of curricular achievement.

When students are experiencing multiple problems such as poverty, family dysfunction, pregnancy, health issues, etc., the need for coordinated and multiple supports was noted by nine focus groups. Specific suggestions were made for increased student involvement in extra-curricular activities, for more Aboriginal counselors, and for integrated support systems based on improved coordination of inter-agency services.

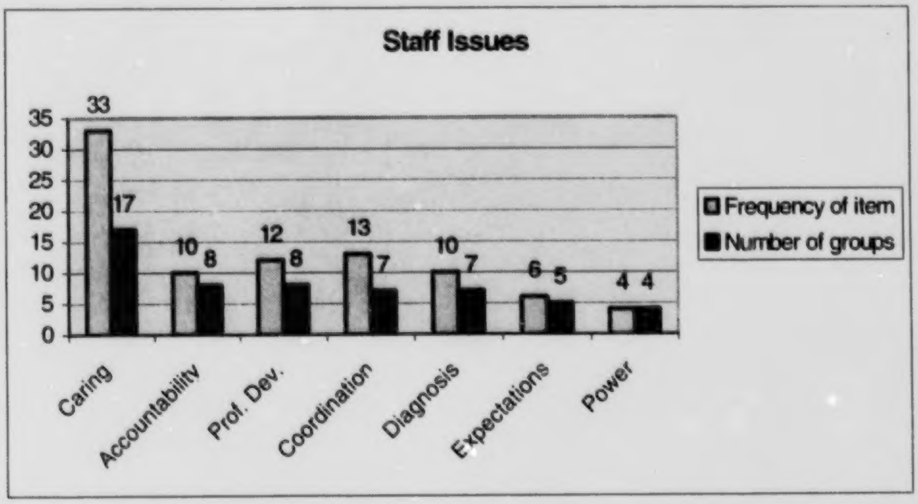
Seven groups talked about the sub-theme of students' age, asking "How do we keep kids who may not be quite finished at 19." The suggestion was made that we need to change the picture of school to a life long approach, providing both more formalized and supported exit and re-entry points in the secondary education system.

Seven groups also discussed the negative impact that labeling has on students. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with counseling and the perception of labeling and streaming for lower achieving students, suggesting that perhaps greater communication is needed instead. An Aboriginal participant stated that psychological assessment tools need to be changed as they are not geared toward Native culture. Another participant stated that high school kids have started to leave 'in their heads' as far back as elementary school because of labeling.

The remaining student sub-themes involved calls for better student tracking systems, by five focus groups, and noted the powerful attraction work has for students especially when the economy is buoyant.

Staff Issues

The third most frequent category of commentary involved staff. The most powerful sub-theme in this category, mentioned by 17 focus groups, were comments about the importance of caring relationships between staff and students. The voices of at-risk students were especially poignant in relation to this sub theme. Where there are caring relationships, students talked about teachers, "who understand us, where we're coming from, [they] cut us slack, but help us to help ourselves." Another student commented, "Teachers and administrators need to be more consistent, persistent and patient in dealing with students… especially those with challenges outside of school." Where a caring relationship has been established, several participants noted, teachers adopt a holistic approach and see themselves as teachers of students, not subjects and don't put an over-emphasis on control. A teacher-advisor program was described as working well in one Lethbridge school.



The quality of teaching was identified as a variable affecting early school leavers by eight focus groups. One principal called for Alberta Learning to consider some alternatives in accountability and measurable outcomes that will reflect the school as a whole. Students in custody talked about their experience of insufficient opportunity to provide input to their school staff where the staff think it is "their way or no way." These at-risk students perceived schools as close-minded and not realizing that kids do things for a reason and the smallest thing to a teacher can be the biggest thing to a student.

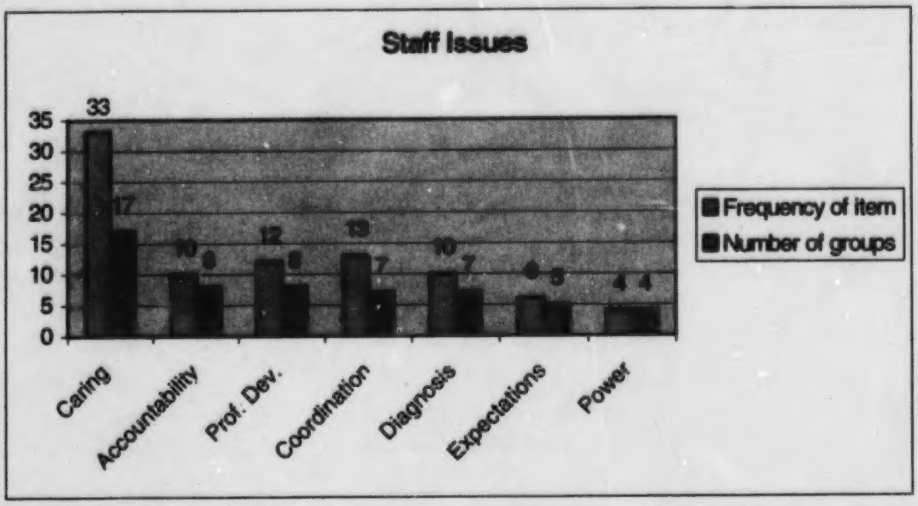
In eight focus groups there were calls, primarily by students and parents, for increased teacher training about Aboriginal people, for a greater emphasis on interpersonal/communications skills for teachers, and for improved diagnosis of students' learning styles and needs.

Seven groups spoke of the need for greater coordination among staff within a school where, "your student is my student." One participant stated, "…all teachers need to have knowledge of learning barriers – teamwork is important – [we] need to connect the academics and the people knowledge." Also noted in this sub-theme was the need for better coordination between school staff and inter-agency support staff.

Related to the need for greater coordination were observations about the need for better approaches to diagnosing students' learning barriers. Reflecting this need, one participant commented, "We need to be more creative in dealing with kids at-risk – more focus on pinpointing the assessment of the problem and then dealing with the kids." Another called for better screening for students with learning barriers, while

Staff Issues

The third most frequent category of commentary involved staff. The most powerful sub-theme in this category, mentioned by 17 focus groups, were comments about the importance of caring relationships between staff and students. The voices of at-risk students were especially poignant in relation to this sub-theme. Where there are caring relationships, students talked about teachers, "who understand us, where we're coming from, [they] cut us slack, but help us to help ourselves." Another student commented, "Teachers and administrators need to be more consistent, persistent and patient in dealing with students… especially those with challenges outside of school." Where a caring relationship has been established, several participants noted, teachers adopt a holistic approach and see themselves as teachers of students, not subjects and don't put an over-emphasis on control. A teacher-advisor program was described as working well in one Lethbridge school.



The quality of teaching was identified as a variable affecting early school leavers by eight focus groups. One principal called for Alberta Learning to consider some alternatives in accountability and measurable outcomes that will reflect the school as a whole. Students in custody talked about their experience of insufficient opportunity to provide input to their school staff where the staff think it is "their way or no way." These at-risk students perceived schools as close-minded and not realizing that kids do things for a reason and the smallest thing to a teacher can be the biggest thing to a student.

In eight focus groups there were calls, primarily by students and parents, for increased teacher training about Aboriginal people, for a greater emphasis on interpersonal/communications skills for teachers, and for improved diagnosis of students' learning styles and needs.

Seven groups spoke of the need for greater coordination among staff within a school where, "your student is my student." One participant stated, "…all teachers need to have knowledge of learning barriers – teamwork is important – [we] need to connect the academics and the people knowledge." Also noted in this sub-theme was the need for better coordination between school staff and inter-agency support staff.

Related to the need for greater coordination were observations about the need for better approaches to diagnosing students' learning barriers. Reflecting this need, one participant commented, "We need to be more creative in dealing with kids at-risk – more focus on pinpointing the assessment of the problem and then dealing with the kids." Another called for better screening for students with learning barriers, while several others called for a whole new "constructive" model of special education, perhaps where funding should be based on treatment provided and results achieved.

The importance of staff expectations for students was raised in five focus groups, with two groups specifically urging that staff should hold high expectations for Aboriginal students. Overall, high expectations for students were seen as positive, but should also be balanced across academic and affective areas.

The last staff related sub-theme involves issues of staff power raised in four focus groups. One adult learner noted that frustration breeds confrontation, providing insight into why and how staff-student power struggles can emerge. One student noted the importance of teacher-student relationships being based on respect.

Community-Family Supports

The fourth most frequent category of commentary involved community, with three sub-themes receiving strong support. The most frequent sub-theme, raised in 13 focus groups, dealt with family and the importance of effective parental involvement with the school. On the negative side of this equation were observations, such as the student who commented, "There will always be school leavers because some families don't encourage high school completion." One participant commented, "The only students I know still in school are those whose parents are directly involved in the child's life." Another participant suggested there is a need for more awareness by parents on the importance of their role as the child's first teacher, noting the need for a greater emphasis in society on parenting skills and child-family support mechanisms.

Community partnerships were discussed by 12 focus groups with a call for stronger school-community relationships to meet students' needs. Reflecting this, one participant commented that "...students need a road map – involving parents and the community. The time is right to continue dialogue and develop action plans...we must be about meeting learner needs...."

A positive manifestation of community involvement was noted in 10 focus groups that talked about role models or mentor programs that can be provided to students through greater community involvement in schools. The participants who spoke about this issue expressed an awareness of the value of a one-on-one relationship for students with an adult role model as the student experiences school.

Funding Issues

The final category of commentary involved funding. Sixteen focus groups raised issues relating to general funding supports for a broad range of needs. The general implication was that removing barriers to high school completion will require increased resources, but that the additional resources are a good investment that saves public sector dollars in the long run.

There were also comments about funding supports for individual adult students and suggestions that funding support should not be based on input or process variables such as attendance, but on outcomes defined by student progress or success in overcoming barriers.

Nine groups raised the issue of the need for increased funding to reduce class size as a means to provide more individual attention to at-risk students. Lastly, one group noted the need for more funding to support finding and maintaining employer contacts in support of the Registered Apprenticeship Program.

RESOURCE PANEL INPUT

The Coordinating Committee identified a small group of resource people who had extensive research or practical background in addressing the issue of early school leavers. These individuals were asked to comment on a discussion paper on early school leavers developed by the Committee. A list of the individuals who were kind enough to provide input and who agreed to be identified appears in Appendix E. Key insights from this group are summarized below.

Overall response from the resource panel to the Committee's discussion paper was one of concurrence with the key theme that early school leaving was a process, not an event, characterized by multiple and dynamic causal factors. Other points of concurrence were that often, early school leavers demonstrated distinctive patterns of dysfunction early in their school lives. The picture of the early school leaver as feeling powerless and unaware of their learning strengths and weaknesses was upheld. The perspective of many of the focus group participants of the traditional curriculum not meeting the needs of at-risk students and the need for more flexible and relevant programs with smoother high school-post secondary linkages was also noted by the resource panel members (Fisk, 1994).

One member, who works extensively with Aboriginal students, noted "there are many reasons why Aboriginal students leave school, and there is not one 'silver bullet' that will put it to rest, thus a multi-leveled and faceted approach will be needed." This member also argued there needs to be "more student supports like advising, career development, community service opportunities and work placement," and suggested that more Aboriginal instructors need to be available to teach Aboriginal curriculum and to create a positive Aboriginal presence within each school. Doctoral research recently completed by a First Nation member (Makokis, 2000) investigated why many First Nations students leave school early. This study reinforces the picture, from an insiders perspective, of the complex causation of early school leaving, and presents a rich description of the interplay between historical, cultural and interpersonal factors that militate against Aboriginal students staying in school. This study calls clearly for systemic change premised on positive relationships based on trust to counteract the alienation Aboriginal student's experience.

The large urban school jurisdictions in Alberta are focusing extensively on improving the achievement of Aboriginal students. Several Aboriginal staff employed by Edmonton Public provided input, again confirming the multiple causes of early school leaving and emphasizing the importance of awareness of Aboriginal culture by students and staff. One employee commented, "I believe that many early school leavers drop out mentally in the earlier grades, and physically drop out when they are sixteen." They pointed to the importance of developing culturally relevant curriculum, such as the *Aboriginal Studies 10, 20 and 30* program currently being piloted in Alberta. Other suggested supports included stronger involvement of the Aboriginal community and families in education, and more Aboriginal staff in schools. Recommended student centered supports included: better linkages to work experience and mentoring programs, more scholarships, grants and awards, expanded access to sports and recreation programs, and improved grade 9 orientation to high school with a stronger emphasis on career planning.

Other panel members thought the discussion paper missed the mark in some respects. One individual believed strongly that the discussion paper did not sufficiently address the causal factors that are based in the family of origin and argued for more emphasis on school-based programs focused on minimizing teen pregnancies and that teach parenting skills. There were also calls for more family supports to link school and home through programs like "Healthy Families"; for stronger head start programs for at-risk students; for full-day Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) programs for at-risk students; and for more family literacy programs. The overall focus of these enhanced initiatives would be to ensure that children begin grade one fully ready to succeed.

Still other panel members argued for a much stronger commitment by the learning system to be more learner focused and to accurately track early school leavers in a much more coordinated and consistent manner. Also presented were suggestions to not over-stress on-time high school completion at the risk of under-investing in mature early school leavers who are not ready to resume their formal education until later in life, when the "healing period" mentioned in the focus groups is over.

Two members of the Barriers to High School Completion Coordinating Committee met with six representatives from the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) on September 22, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the commonality between Alberta Learning's *Barriers to High School Completion* project and EPSB's work in the area of preventing early school leaving.

Agreement was established early in the dialogue that traditional solutions have tended to treat early school leavers as victims and that the term "early school leaver" was preferable over the term "dropout" in order to avoid the negative, victim-oriented connotation of the latter. Also, notable was consensus that solutions to early school leaving will require a redefinition of the issue and will involve comprehensive, systemic solutions. EPSB's research on this issue confirmed several assumptions: that many early school leavers reach a crisis stage during grade 8-9; that transiency tends to be higher in this group; and that patterns of high needs linked to multiple causes are common. It was noted that a diploma is not necessary for completion and that this observation fits the Barriers Committee definition of completion. Tracking issues were also discussed and it was observed that controlling for in/out migration at the jurisdiction level was a challenge, making a universal tracking system imperative. There was consensus that models of cooperative education and program flexibility for students should be high priorities in the solution set for removing barriers. Centre High's close connection to the Continuing Education program was noted as an excellent example of program continuity. Some caution was voiced about how student success is defined in relationship to credits acquired, so as not to unwittingly constrain student choice and flexibility.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN – REMOVING BARRIERS

Where we are now: Presently, high school completion, defined as students completing high school within six years of entering grade 9, is hovering around 70%. As the data on page six of this document demonstrates, longer-term high school completion rises to around 80% for 24 year olds and 81% for 29 year olds. Current programs that are seen to be effective in supporting students at risk of leaving school early include Outreach Programs and vocational programming such as RAP and Green Certificate that build on the student's abilities, aptitudes and career interests. Post-secondary programs for adult learners also contribute substantially to assisting students to acquire high school level competencies.

Programs designed to give students a strong sense of belonging and that establish caring staff-student relationships were often described as effective. Early intervention programs such as the Early Literacy Initiative, designed to build readiness skills early in the student's school experience, are seen as promising, but there were calls for greater coordination and even earlier interventions than are currently occurring. We do not presently have a systemic provincial plan to define a comprehensive and articulated approach to removing barriers to high school completion.

Where we want to be: Alberta is presently experiencing strong economic growth and high employment rates. Early school leaver rates typically climb in such circumstances. However, given the increasing importance of formal education for employment success in an information economy, short-term targets of 75% and 85% for completion within 6 years of entering grade 9 and longer term high school completion are realistic. In the long term, however, Alberta can only be satisfied when "…every youth will complete high school with certification that is commensurate with abilities and interests," (Conference Board of Canada, 2000 p.11) and that lead to successful career paths. These targets will only be achievable, however, if a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to removing barriers to high school completion is created and implemented. One focus group described the process of building such a plan as requiring profound change where, instead of making the student fit the high school, we ensure the high school fits the student. Such thinking supports the argument that systemic changes will be necessary to achieve universal high school completion rates.

How we will get there: The key outcomes identifies in this report, considered as a whole, point the way to substantive, systemic change. Some of the outcomes are low cost while others may require substantial resource support. Although the input to the *Barriers to High School Completion* project was broadly based, formal stakeholder reaction to this report will be required to gauge the level of professional and public support for the suggested outcomes detailed in the next section.

Relative to implementation considerations, many of the suggested outcomes are written with the intent that they can be incorporated in the Ministry of Learning three-year plan and/or in school jurisdiction or post-secondary institutions three-year education or business plans. By identifying key outcome intent is to provide maximum flexibility and support for school based solutions and strategies. Hence the Ministry's accountability framework may serve as a major implementation vehicle for this strategic plan for removing barriers to high school completion.

Many of the suggested outcomes in this strategic plan must be addressed at the jurisdiction level, and some require close collaboration between Alberta Learning and school jurisdictions and post-secondary institutions.

Twenty-one suggested outcomes were derived from the literature review, focus group analysis and the input from the resource panel. The 21 outcomes were then organized in relationship to key themes that served to logically organize the outcomes, which are presented in the next section of this report. The key organizing themes are:

1. Early childhood development supports
2. Listening to and supporting students
3. Managing student alienation
4. Success for aboriginal students
5. Students knowledge of self and effects of labeling
6. Program flexibility
7. Cooperative education
8. Tracking students
9. Best practices

KEY THEMES AND RELATED SUGGESTED OUTCOMES

The above nine themes provide the framework for organizing the suggested outcomes. The themes are further fleshed out and supported with related text from the report in this section. Examples of activities underway or suggested activities are identified to facilitate development of specific strategies to achieve the desired outcome.

1. **Early Childhood Development Supports** – Consistent attention was focused on the importance of enhancing early childhood development supports by focus groups, the resource panel and by the literature. There appears to be a growing appreciation that the early environment children grow up in powerfully shapes their future opportunities for success in school. In many cases parents, as the child's primary advocate, need additional supports to optimize their children's potential. Alberta has, in the past few years, heeded this growing perception by allocating increasing resources to early childhood development, and yet a comprehensive, articulated strategy for using these resources is largely dependent on the right set of variables or events at the local level. The following are three suggested outcomes to address this theme.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Many observations were of students struggling with inter-generation patterns of low education success, or low family income levels negatively affecting students' chances for success. • …there is a need for more awareness by parents on the importance of their role as the child's first teacher, noting the need for a greater emphasis in society on parenting skills and child-family support mechanisms. • "The only students I know still in school are those whose parents are directly involved in the child's life." • An example of a promising support program is the Healthy Families initiative funded by the Edmonton Community Foundation.	**a. Community agencies with mandates that include family supports work closely with school jurisdictions to promote and facilitate positive parenting that provides stimulating and nurturing home environments.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Collaborative work between jurisdictions and community agencies to provide parent supports.* • *Community Family Literacy Program, Parent/Child Literacy Strategy, Aboriginal Head-start, Program Enhancement Projects.* • *ACYI initiatives (eg., Student Health, Pre-conception to Six) that build school/home/community relationships.*
• Community partnerships were discussed by 12 focus groups who called for stronger school – community relationships to meet students needs. Reflecting this, one participant commented, "…students need a road map – involving parents and the community. The time is right to continue dialogue and develop action plans… We must be about meeting learner needs…."	**b. The education planning and reporting process leads to optimum community supports through partnerships with other government agencies and community supports.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Programs such as Early Literacy Initiative, Enhanced Opportunity Projects and Program Unit Funding.* • *Alberta Learning collaborates with jurisdictions to develop outcome measures to assess readiness skills of grade one students.*
• There was considerable interest in parent supports to link school and home. Through initiatives like stronger head start programs for at-risk students, full-day Early Childhood Services (kindergarten) programs for at-risk students, and more family literacy programs, children can begin grade one fully ready to succeed.	**c. There is a better understanding of the learning achievements needed by grade one students to promote success, and programs are adjusted to better develop these skills in pre-school children.** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Alberta Learning and school jurisdictions collaborate to gather Effective Strategies that enhance the development of entry level skills needed to be successful in grade 1.*

2. **Listening to and Supporting Students** – Students at risk of leaving school early tend to be the most disenfranchised students in the schools while coping with complex problems in their lives. Students' frustration with their lack of success can easily lead to confrontational relationships and power struggles with teachers and peers. The following three suggested outcomes are intended to ensure students' voices are heard and that they receive the support they need to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Other student affect issues included… the need to provide for more student involvement and decision making in their school lives.	**a. Through greater involvement in school-based decision-making, students have an increased sense of belonging and commitment to school life.** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Alberta Learning consult with education partners to review the School Councils regulation to include junior high school student involvement in school councils.* • *Discuss the suggested outcome with Alberta Home and School Council Association as a possible link with the Minister's Forum on School Councils follow-up.*
• More personal approaches to interacting with students were suggested as a way of making schools less alienating to students. • A positive manifestation of community involvement was noted in 10 focus groups that talked about role models or mentor programs that can be provided to students through greater community involvement in schools. The participants who spoke about this issue expressed an awareness of the value of a one-on-one relationship for students with an adult role model as the student experiences school. • Five groups spoke about affective supports for students, including keeping students focused through athletics, building support networks in schools, emphasizing friendliness, and recognition and reward programs for student successes.	**b. There are greater opportunities to support students in overcoming barriers to success through extra-curricular activities, mentoring programs, and recognition of students' successes.** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Continue and enhance recognition of students' successes in extra-curricular activities and mentoring programs.* • *Share the recognition ideas with organizations and authorities.* • *Encourage student volunteerism in the community.*

- At-risk students were also described as often being involved in power struggles with other students as a means to improve their status and self-esteem. Consequently peer relationships among early school leavers are frequently negative. Instead of providing peer support networks among early school leavers, cliques and group conflict sometimes emerges. A better model of peer relating with more supports for peer relationships was called for.

- Closely related to the sub-theme of student affect was the sub-theme of students' use of illegal drugs or alcohol. Ten focus groups raised this issue raising a relatively common concern that drugs or alcohol seem to be easier to get at an earlier age.

- When students are experiencing multiple problems such as poverty, family dysfunction, pregnancy, health issues, etc. the need for coordinated and multiple supports was noted by nine focus groups.

c. School programs and curriculum provide greater and more consistent opportunities for students to identify issues and develop skills in managing peer conflict, anger management, family conflict, parenting skills, health, human sexuality, and drug abuse awareness.

Examples of activities underway:

- *Alberta Learning provides in-servicing for school authorities' staff to assist in the implementation of the new K-9 Health and Life Skills curriculum.*

3. **Managing Student Alienation** – Students at risk of leaving school early are highly alienated. Comments from students like, "Students are shadows of learning disabilities" or "Learning barriers have to heal… students have to go through stages [of healing]" speak to the depth of emotion at-risk students experience as they attempt to cope with schooling. Schools as organizations can displace the primary goal of being there for students. The *Safe and Caring Schools* initiative is providing important programming support to help address this area of student need. However, routine assessment of students' affective experience of school would help to ensure that schools respond appropriately to the emotional needs of students.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Nineteen focus groups reflecting 57 comments or observations dealt with the sub-theme of students' affective experience of school. One participant noted that students drop out incrementally, course by course. More personal approaches to interacting with students were suggested as a way of making schools less alienating to students.	**a. All students feel cared for and safe.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Maintain and enhance the provision of a safe and caring school environment through the Effective Behavioural Support program (phase 2 of the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative).* • *Outreach programs which cater to the needs of expectant and new mothers provide programming to assist the students with life issues.*
• Where a caring relationship has been established, several participants noted teachers adopt a holistic approach and see themselves as teachers of students, not subjects and don't put an over-emphasis on control. A teacher-advisor program was described as working well in one Lethbridge school. • The most powerful sub-theme in this category, mentioned by 17 focus groups were comments on the importance of caring relationships between staff and students. In eight focus groups there were calls, primarily by students and parents, for increased teacher training about Aboriginal people and for a greater emphasis on interpersonal or communications skills for teachers.	b. **School staff and community actively promote a safe and caring school culture for students.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects that address safe and caring strategies for alienation, power struggles, behaviour and attitudes.*

4. **Success for Aboriginal Students** – Cross-cultural awareness and respecting Aboriginal cultures were major themes in the focus group discussions and resource panel input. Bridging cultural differences and defining enlightened policy approaches in support of Aboriginal learners will continue to be a priority for the Department of Learning.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• The Aboriginal population has historically experienced higher early school leaving rates compared to the general population. Stats Can data (Galt, 2000) indicate that the percentage of early school leavers in the Aboriginal population remains unacceptably high. In 1996, 45% of Canadian Aboriginal people aged 20-29 had not completed high school. • Program relevance was a sub-theme identified in 9 focus groups that spoke of the need to adapt the curriculum to the learning styles, history and culture of Aboriginal people and the value of ensuring that teaching methods match students interests and learning styles. • Specific suggestions were made for supports for student involvement in extra-curricular activities, for more Aboriginal counselors and instructors, and for integrated support systems based on improved coordination of inter-agency services. • An Aboriginal participant stated that psychological assessment tools need to be changed as they are not geared toward Native culture.	a. **Measures or actions emerging from the *Removing Barriers to High School Completion – Final Report* complement and support strategies for increasing successful high school completion by Aboriginal students that emerge from *First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Report* and *Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework*.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Native Education Projects, Amiskwaciy School and Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30 Curriculum.* **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Align strategies identified in this report with those in the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Report and in Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework.*

5. **Students' Knowledge of Self and Effects of Labeling** – Adult students who had left school but returned to formal education later in their lives spoke compellingly about their previous experience of schooling. They spoke about not knowing or understanding their levels of achievement or why they struggled with their schooling, not understanding how to compensate positively for weaknesses and build on their strengths. Adult and younger students also spoke of the devastating effects of being labeled and how this effect damaged their self-confidence. The next set of suggested outcomes addresses these issues.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Eight focus groups spoke of students not acquiring foundational academic skills because too often students are given "social passes" when they had not learned the curriculum for their grade level. Related to this concern was the perceived need for better parent and student self-knowledge of curricular achievement.	**a. Students and their parents have clear knowledge and understanding of the student's curricular achievement, ideal learning styles, and the student's affective experience of school** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Consider the inclusion of portfolio development as early as grade 7 in the review of the CALM curriculum.*
• There were many observations of the need for better approaches to diagnosing students' learning barriers. Reflecting this need, one participant commented, "We need to be more creative in dealing with kids at-risk – more focus on pinpointing the assessment of the problem and then dealing with the kids." Another called for better screening for students with learning barriers, while several others called for a whole new models of special education, perhaps where funding should be based on treatment provided and results achieved. • Seven groups also discussed the negative impact that labeling has on students. One participant expressed dissatisfaction with counseling and the perception of labeling and streaming for lower achieving students, suggesting that greater communication is needed.	**b. New approaches to special education are in place that de-emphasize labels and emphasize diagnosis, counseling and program solutions to students' learning challenges.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Implementation of the Special Education Review includes recommendation on new approaches to funding and supporting students with special needs.*

• In eight focus groups there were calls, primarily by students and parents, for increased teacher training about Aboriginal people, for a greater emphasis on interpersonal/communications skills for teachers, and for improved diagnosis of students' learning styles and needs. • The importance of staff expectations for students was raised in five focus groups, with two groups specifically urging that staff should hold high expectations for Aboriginal students.	**c. Teachers have the necessary understandings of diagnostic results, teamwork skills, and cross-cultural sensitivities to meet the learning needs of at-risk students.** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Alberta Learning and education partners review the Teaching Quality Standard to determine the extent to which its competencies are included in pre and in-service opportunities.*
• The quality of teaching was identified as a variable affecting early school leavers by eight focus groups. • "…all teachers need to have knowledge of learning barriers – teamwork is important – [we] need to connect the academics and the people knowledge."	**d. Teachers are provided with opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of their students' levels of achievement and learning styles, and incorporate these in their teaching methods and teamwork strategies.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Alberta Learning continues to support regional consortia, and work on the Efficacy Study to be piloted in 2001/2002 and in 2002/2003 for those teachers applying for permanent certification.*

6. **Program Flexibility** - Program flexibility was a major issue in the focus group discussions. One group captured this succinctly when they commented, "Its time to…make high school fit the student, not the student fit the high school." Seamless learning will require post-secondary institutions collaborating with high schools to offer alternative delivery methods, occupational training opportunities, just-in-time remedial instruction and other supports to at-risk students.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Seven groups talked about the sub-theme of students' age; asking, how do we keep kids in school who may not be quite finished at 20. The suggestion was made that we need to change the picture of school to a life long approach providing both more formalized and supported exit and re-entry points in the secondary education system.	**a. Successfully support more Albertans in completing high school.** **Examples of suggested activities:** • *Alberta Learning continue its emphasis to life-long learning which recognizes that high school completion provides a solid foundation for continuous learning.*
• Program was the dominant category of commentary in the focus group discussions. The most frequent sub-theme raised in 20 focus groups were calls for improved program flexibility for students. • The traditional high school curriculum was often seen as being too focused on university preparation. Consequently, career preparation in the trades was not seen as being sufficiently tailored to students learning styles, learning strengths or optimal career options.	**b. Through greater choice, students have more relevant program options that better meet their needs.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Jurisdictions provide more choice through alternative programs and flexible programming (eg., outreach, home schooling, Tech Prep, Work Experience, RAP, IOP, and CTS).*
• High school programs for adults should not be seen as merely a safety net for early leavers, but an integral part of the strategy to address barriers to student success. This suggests a much higher level of collaboration between high schools and post-secondary providers of basic education programs for adults.	**c. Through a more seamless education system, adult students complete programs and receive a departmentally issued credential.** **Examples of activities underway:** • *Common Credentials Project as part of Adult Skills Alberta.*

7. **Cooperative Education** – The common perception that the basic education system is biased in favor of academically-oriented students received considerable validation in this project. Eighty-two percent of the focus groups raised cooperative education and the need to make schooling more relevant for trades-oriented students by improving the linkages between school and work.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
- Program transitions from junior high to high school and from high school to post-secondary study were suggested by 15 focus groups as deserving attention. Grade 9 was described as a crunch point for many students with too few program options being available, especially for the vocationally oriented students.	a. **Grade 9 curriculum includes an orientation towards the trades and other occupations.** **Examples of suggested activity:** - *Broad consultation with education partners on the orientation of the grade 9 curriculum.*
- "Schools should be more flexible and student focused." - Career and Technology Studies and Registered Apprenticeship Programs were widely supported, but there were compelling calls for extending these efforts through better articulation with technical institutes and with the work place while at the same time linking more fundamentally with the individual student's abilities, interests and needs.	b. **Students' school life and work life are more closely linked.** **Examples of activity underway:** - *Registered Apprenticeship Program, Work Experience Program, Career and Technology Studies.*
- The perspective strongly represented in four focus groups is that IOP is too often a "dumping ground" for students with learning disabilities. One participant commented that IOP results in "…students getting lost in the middle – on the one hand they can't go on to post-secondary, yet they can't really go into the trades route." There were also concerns about labeling students with low expectations once placed in IOP. - This recommended strategy is also aligned with recommendations of the *Final Report of the Common Credentials Project.* It suggests a critical point of intersection of the goals for close collaboration between high schools, business and industry, post-secondary institutions and Adult Skills Alberta for a seamless education system.	c. **Integrated Occupational Program students complete a high school diploma with greater opportunities to pursue career interests.** **Examples of activity underway:** - *Redesign of the IOP curriculum and better links to CTS courses for IOP students.*

8. **Tracking Students** – Concomitant with increasing program flexibility for students is the need to improve the education system's ability to track students. An improved "ECS- grade 16" tracking system that follows students into post-secondary institutions will provide the ability to confirm what program supports are working and where resources might be better allocated over time.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• The remaining student sub-themes involved calls for better student tracking systems by five focus groups…. • Still other resource people argued for a much stronger commitment by the learning system to accurately track early school leavers in a much more coordinated and consistent manner.	a. **Alberta Learning more accurately tracks early school leaving, program choices and levels of success.** **Example of activity underway:** • *Development of single student identifier is underway.*

9. **Best Practices** – Focus group participants talked fairly consistently about the need to invest wisely in education. Program spending that helps students complete high school may reduce future demands on social support programs by building on best practices today.

Issues or Observations	**Suggested Outcomes**
• Sixteen focus groups raised issues relating to general funding supports for a broad range of needs. The general implication here was that removing barriers to high school completion will require increased resources, but that the additional resources are a good investment that saves public sector dollars in the long run.	a. **The resource issues related to the implementation of the removing *Barriers to High School Completion - Final Report* are addressed in collaboration with our education partners.** **Example of activity underway:** • *Alberta Learning collaborates with education partners to identify stay-in-school strategies that need to be supported, enhanced and strengthened.*

How We Will Know We Have Arrived – The above suggested outcomes comprise a significant realignment of roles, responsibilities and student supports in the basic/adult education system. Realization of all of the recommended outcomes will represent profound and systemic change. Implementation will require time; therefore, an incremental increase in expected results is suggested. Key outcome measures of high school completion reported in Alberta Learning's Annual Results Report will tell us whether the above outcomes for removing barriers to high school completion are successful. The key measures will be the achievement of high school completion rates by 19 year olds of 75% and longer-term completion by 24 year olds of 85% by 2005. Over the longer term, completion rates should start to reflect the benefits of early intervention strategies and targets of 90% and 95% respectively by 2015 are recommended. Although such targets are ambitious, Albertans should expect no less in an information age characterized by global competition.

APPENDIX A – ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS FROM THE CORPORATE DATA WAREHOUSE (CDW)

INTRODUCTION

Alberta Learning has initiated a research project to identify characteristics of students who do not complete high school within six years of entering grade 9. This project is a multifaceted one, and includes a literature and best practices review, an analysis of characteristics associated with school leavers, and focus groups across Alberta, culminating in a strategic plan designed to improve on-time school completion.

This report uses education related, administrative data from Alberta Learning's Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) to analyze the characteristics of students who do not complete high school or complete only after an extended period of time. Obtaining additional information about these groups will enable Alberta Learning to better understand the factors that contribute to high school non-completion, and will facilitate the completion of the department's strategic plan.

CDW ANALYSIS GOALS

The goal of analyzing student data from the CDW is to determine, in so far as these records permit, the differences between the following cohorts of students:

- students completing high school[2] within three years *(on-time completers)*;
- students completing high school in more than three years but within five years *(late completers)*;
- students completing high school in more than five years *(long-term completers)*;
- students not completing, and still registered in, high school *(continuers)*; and
- students who do not complete high school *(leavers)*.

This research project will develop a comprehensive profile on late/non-completers, and will contribute to the identification of strategies and actions designed to improve completion rates in Alberta secondary schools.

CDW ANALYSIS SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This component of the barriers to high school completion project is limited to an analysis of administrative data from Alberta Learning's CDW, and is run on the student cohorts who began grade 10 in either 1994[3] or 1995. These cohorts will be followed until 1999. The following information on these cohorts of students is included in this analysis, and falls into three broad categories:

---

[2] Students 'completing high school' are defined as students who obtain a high school diploma (excepting a High School Equivalency Diploma), or who complete 4 diploma exam courses including English 30/33.

[3] Alberta Learning's student registration and demographic system — the Student Information System — was not fully implemented until 1995/96. As such, analysis of the 1994/95 cohort may not be possible or will only be based on partial data.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS:

- gender;
- exceptional student designation (severe or mild/moderate disability);
- English as a second language designation;
- Aboriginal status;
- home education / home education blended program;
- French immersion program;
- IOP program/courses;
- CTS courses;
- RAP courses; and
- registration flow pattern (whether the student has left school, attended continuously, or is returning after an absence).

COURSE INFORMATION:

- course patterns — differences in course levels and subject areas;
- number of credits earned;
- performance on grade 9 achievement tests;
- proportion of courses failed;
- overall course averages.

SCHOOL/AUTHORITY CHARACTERISTICS:

- type of authority — private vs. public vs. Francophone system;
- jurisdiction;
- school size;
- urban/rural status — by city of school.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

THE POPULATION UNDER CONSIDERATION, AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN COMPLETERS AND NON-COMPLETERS, ARE DEFINED BELOW.

Population: High school students in the CDW have a grade 10 start year and month, indicating when they began grade 10. For this study, all students with a grade 10 start year of 1994 or 1995 were chosen. For a small number of students, using our current methodology, we are unable to calculate a grade 10 start date. Typically, these are students who have completed the majority of their high school program outside of Alberta. These students are excluded from the current study.

Completers: The *Completers* cohort comprises

i. *Diploma completers* — all students receiving a diploma excepting an Equivalency diploma; and

ii. *Non-diploma completers* — all students receiving a passing grade in at least 4 diploma examination courses, one of which must be Eng 30 or Eng 33.

Non-completers: **The *Non-completers* cohort comprises**

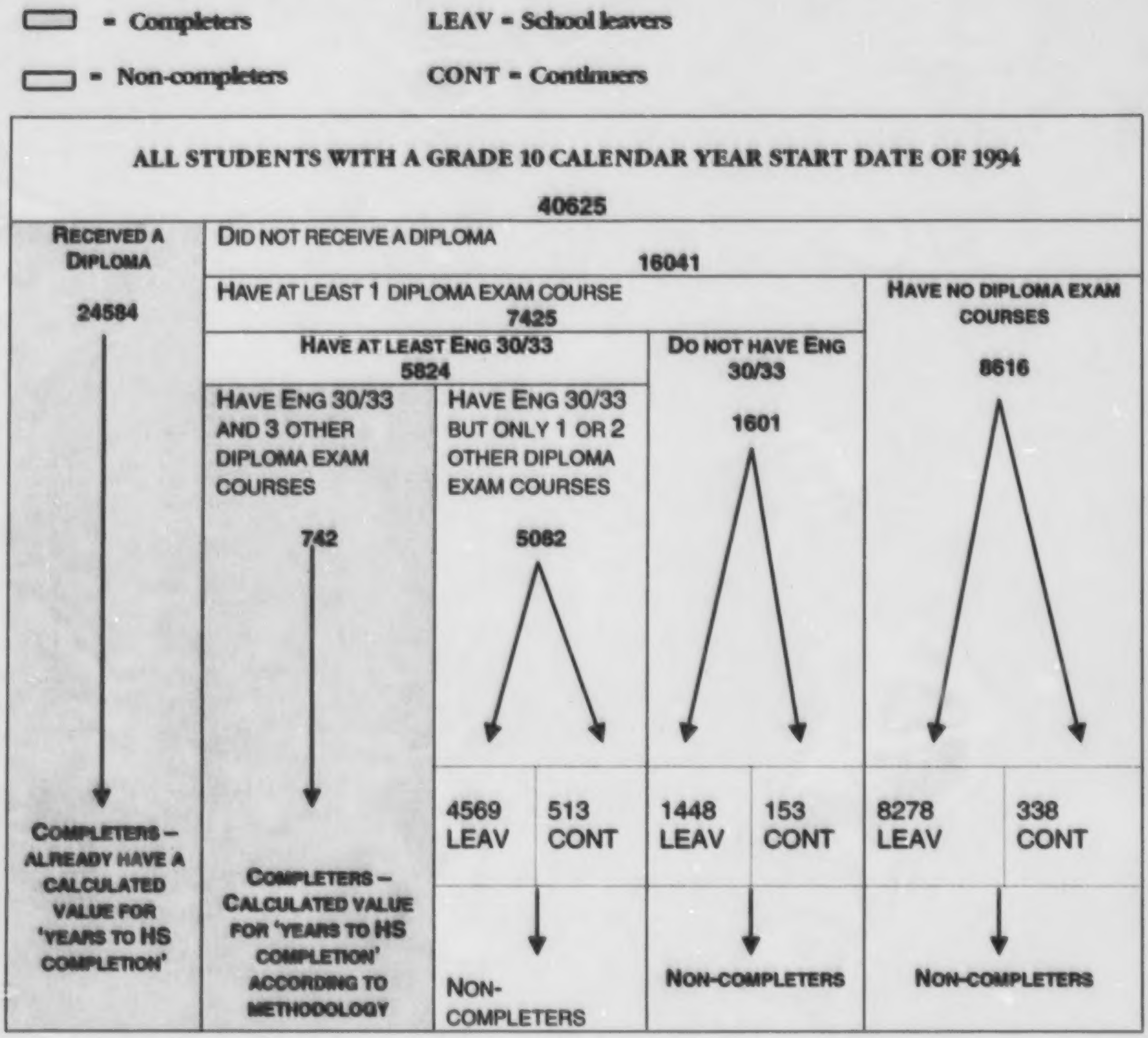
I. *Leavers* — Students who have not completed and who are no longer registered in the Alberta school system; and

I. *Continuers* — Students who have not completed but are registered in the Alberta school system as of the second term of 1999.

Figure 1 examines the status of 40625 students beginning grade 10 in 1994. Just over three in five students (62.3%) completed high school, the vast majority (97.1%) of these receiving diplomas. Only 742 students (1.8%) passed four diploma exam courses but did not have a diploma. Of the 15299 students who did not complete, 93.4% have left the school system, and only 1004 (2.5% of the entire cohort) are still in school as of the second term of 1999. It is important to note that the number of non-completers is inflated since mortality and out-migration are not taken into account.

Figure 2 presents similar information for the 1995 grade 10 cohort. Almost an identical proportion of students had completed high school (62.2%), with almost all of these (97.4%) having received a diploma. While the proportion of all non-completers from the 1995 cohort is identical to the 1994 proportion, significantly more students from 1995 are continuing in school (6.2% of all 1995 students, compared with 2.5% of all 1994 students).

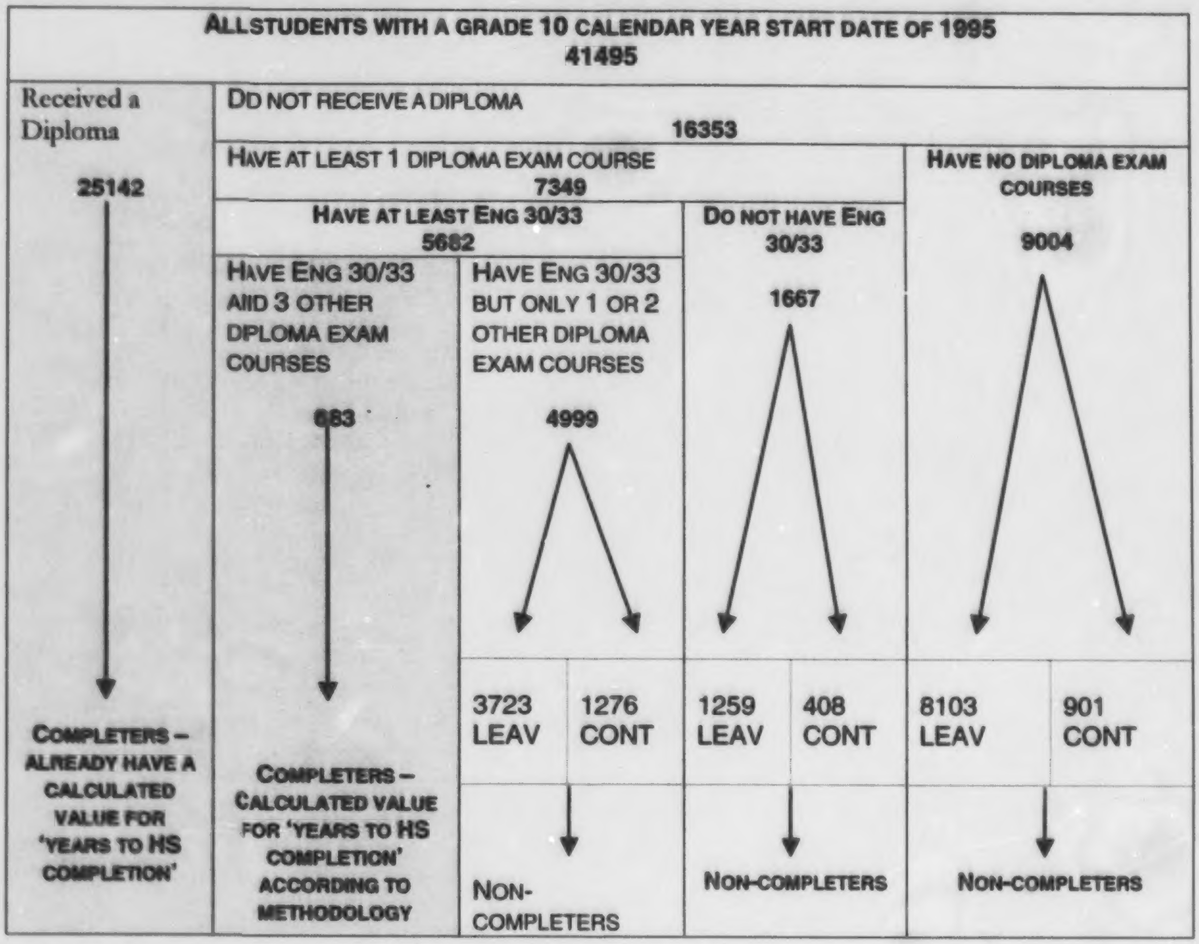
Figure 1 - School Leavers Study Cohort Selection — 1994


▨ = Completers
☐ = Non-completers
LEAV = School leavers
CONT = Continuers
ALL STUDENTS WITH A GRADE 10 CALENDAR YEAR START DATE OF 1994
40625
RECEIVED A DIPLOMA
24584
COMPLETERS – ALREADY HAVE A CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION'
DID NOT RECEIVE A DIPLOMA
16041
HAVE AT LEAST 1 DIPLOMA EXAM COURSE
7425
HAVE AT LEAST ENG 30/33
5824
HAVE ENG 30/33 AND 3 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
742
COMPLETERS – CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION' ACCORDING TO METHODOLOGY
HAVE ENG 30/33 BUT ONLY 1 OR 2 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
5082
4569 LEAV
513 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
DO NOT HAVE ENG 30/33
1601
1448 LEAV
153 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
HAVE NO DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
8616
8278 LEAV
338 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS

TOTAL STUDENTS IN COHORT	=	40625			100.0%
DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	24584			60.5%
NON-DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	742			1.8%
TOTAL COMPLETERS	=	24584 + 742	=	25326	62.3%
LEAVERS	=	14295			35.2%
CONTINUERS	=	1004			2.5%
TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS	=	14295 + 1004	=	15299	37.7%

Figure 2 -- School Leavers Study Cohort Selection — 1995

▨ = **Completers**	**LEAV = School leavers**
☐ = **Non-completers**	**CONT = Continuers**

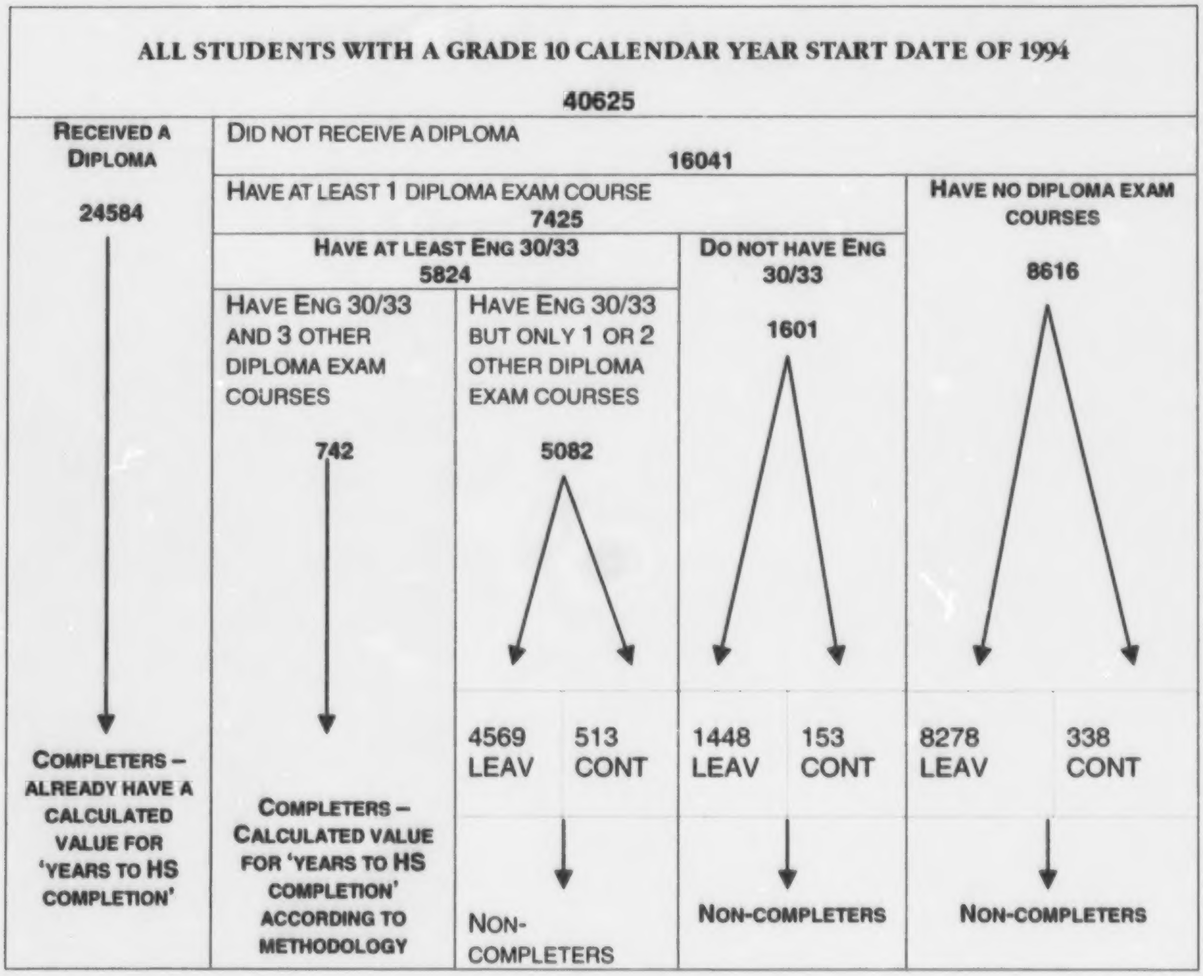

ALLSTUDENTS WITH A GRADE 10 CALENDAR YEAR START DATE OF 1995
41495
Received a Diploma
25142
COMPLETERS – ALREADY HAVE A CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION'
DD NOT RECEIVE A DIPLOMA
16353
HAVE AT LEAST 1 DIPLOMA EXAM COURSE
7349
HAVE AT LEAST ENG 30/33
5682
HAVE ENG 30/33 AIID 3 OTHER DPLOMA EXAM COURSES
683
COMPLETERS – CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION' ACCORDING TO METHODOLOGY
HAVE ENG 30/33 BUT ONLY 1 OR 2 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
4999
3723 LEAV
1276 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
DO NOT HAVE ENG 30/33
1667
1259 LEAV
408 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
HAVE NO DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
9004
8103 LEAV
901 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS

TOTAL STUDENTS IN COHORT	=	41495			100.0%
DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	25142			60.6%
NON-DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	683			1.6%
TOTAL COMPLETERS	=	24584 + 683	=	25825	62.2%
LEAVERS	=	13085			31.5%
CONTINUERS	=	2585			6.2%
TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS	=	13085 + 2585	=	15670	37.8%

Figure 1 - School Leavers Study Cohort Selection — 1994

▭ = Completers LEAV = School leavers

▭ = Non-completers CONT = Continuers

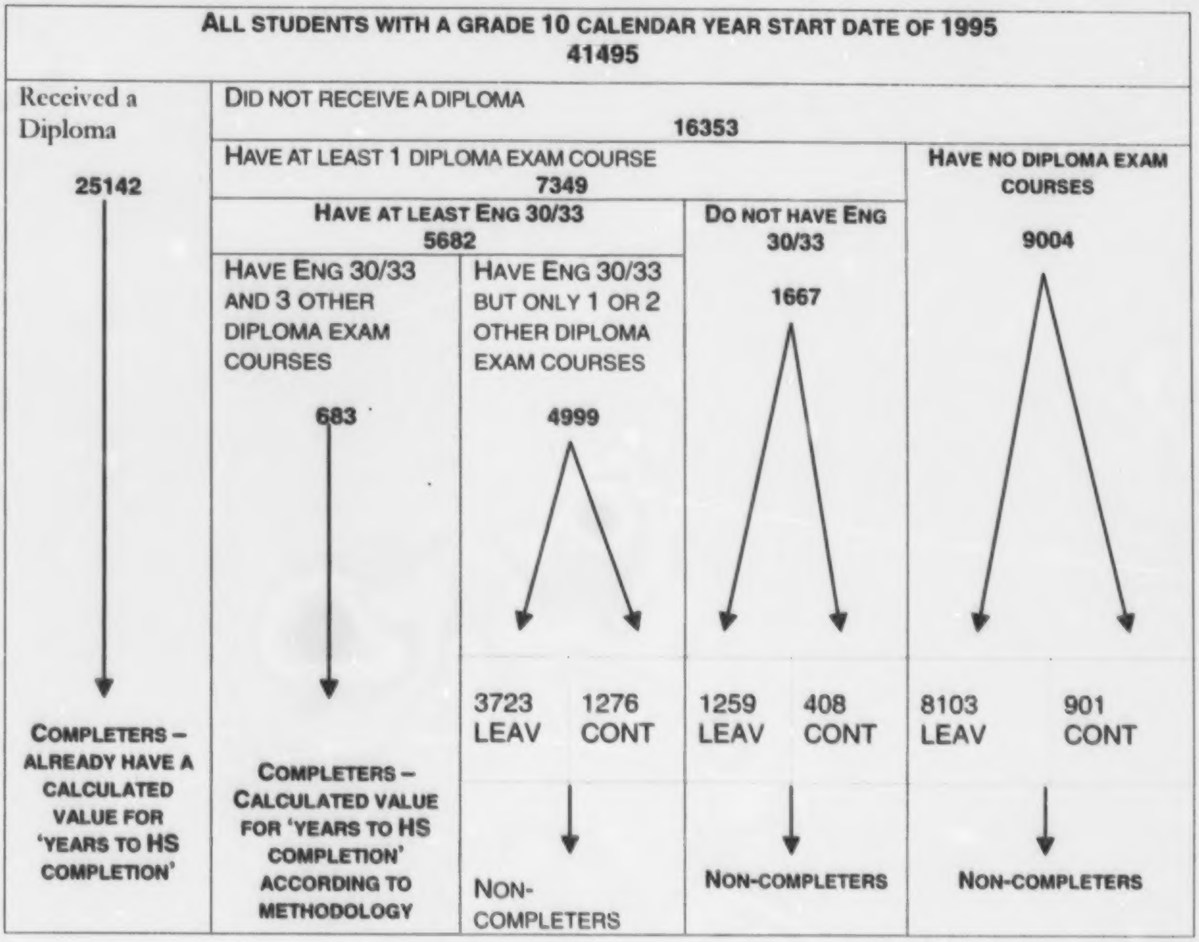

ALL STUDENTS WITH A GRADE 10 CALENDAR YEAR START DATE OF 1994
40625
RECEIVED A DIPLOMA
24584
DID NOT RECEIVE A DIPLOMA
16041
HAVE AT LEAST 1 DIPLOMA EXAM COURSE
7425
HAVE NO DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
8616
HAVE AT LEAST ENG 30/33
5824
DO NOT HAVE ENG 30/33
1601
HAVE ENG 30/33 AND 3 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
742
HAVE ENG 30/33 BUT ONLY 1 OR 2 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
5082
4569 LEAV
513 CONT
1448 LEAV
153 CONT
8278 LEAV
338 CONT
COMPLETERS – ALREADY HAVE A CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION'
COMPLETERS – CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION' ACCORDING TO METHODOLOGY
NON-COMPLETERS
NON-COMPLETERS
NON-COMPLETERS

TOTAL STUDENTS IN COHORT	=	40625			100.0%
DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	24584			60.5%
NON-DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	742			1.8%
TOTAL COMPLETERS	=	24584 + 742	=	25326	62.3%
LEAVERS	=	14295			35.2%
CONTINUERS	=	1004			2.5%
TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS	=	14295 + 1004	=	15299	37.7%

Figure 2 -- School Leavers Study Cohort Selection — 1995

▭ = Completers
LEAV = School leavers

▭ = Non-completers
CONT = Continuers


ALL STUDENTS WITH A GRADE 10 CALENDAR YEAR START DATE OF 1995
41495
Received a Diploma
25142
COMPLETERS – ALREADY HAVE A CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION'
DID NOT RECEIVE A DIPLOMA
16353
HAVE AT LEAST 1 DIPLOMA EXAM COURSE
7349
HAVE AT LEAST ENG 30/33
5682
HAVE ENG 30/33 AND 3 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
683
COMPLETERS – CALCULATED VALUE FOR 'YEARS TO HS COMPLETION' ACCORDING TO METHODOLOGY
HAVE ENG 30/33 BUT ONLY 1 OR 2 OTHER DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
4999
3723 LEAV
1276 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
DO NOT HAVE ENG 30/33
1667
1259 LEAV
408 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS
HAVE NO DIPLOMA EXAM COURSES
9004
8103 LEAV
901 CONT
NON-COMPLETERS

TOTAL STUDENTS IN COHORT	=	41495			100.0%
DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	25142			60.6%
NON-DIPLOMA COMPLETERS	=	683			1.6%
TOTAL COMPLETERS	=	24584 + 683	=	25825	62.2%
LEAVERS	=	13085			31.5%
CONTINUERS	=	2585			6.2%
TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS	=	13085 + 2585	=	15670	37.8%

Table 1 illustrates the time taken to complete high school for both diploma and non-diploma completers. For the combined 1994 and 1995 cohort, 89.6% of students who completed high school did so "on-time" (within three years). There are slightly more on-time completers within the 1995 cohort (91.3% vs. 87.9%). Almost all other completers (9.1%) finish within one additional year. Only 14 students from 1994 were long-term completers, taking more than five years to complete. There were no long-term completers from the 1995 cohort. Less than five percent (4.4%) of the entire two year cohort of 82120 students are long-term continuers, still registered in high school in the second term of 1999. One-third of the combined cohort (27380 students) left school without completing.

Table 1

Completion Status of Students Beginning Grade 10 in 1994 or 1995

Completion Status	Years to Complete	Total Students			% of Completers			% of all Students		
		1994	1995	Total	1994	1995	Total	1994	1995	Total
On-time Completer	**0 - 3 years**	**22271**	**23569**	**45840**	**87.9**	**91.3**	**89.6**	**54.8**	**56.8**	**55.8**
Late Completer	3.5	1155	1020	**2175**	4.6	3.9	**4.3**	2.8	2.5	**2.6**
	4	1247	1191	**2438**	4.9	4.6	**4.8**	3.1	2.9	**3.0**
	4.5	275	45	**320**	1.1	0.2	**0.6**	0.7	0.7	**0.4**
	5	364	0	**364**	1.4	0.0	**0.7**	0.9	0.0	**0.4**
	3.5 – 5 years	**3041**	**2256**	**5297**	**12.0**	**8.7**	**10.4**	**7.5**	**5.4**	**6.5**
Long-term Completer	**5.5**	**14**	**0**	**14**	**0.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
All Completers		25326	25825	**51151**	100	100	**100**	62.3	62.2	**62.3**
Continuer		1004	2585	**3589**				2.5	6.2	**4.4**
Leaver		14295	13085	**27380**				35.2	31.5	**33.3**
All Students		**40625**	**41495**	**82120**				**100**	**100**	**100**

DEMOGRAPHIC AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

This section of the report examines demographic and educational program characteristics of the 1994 and 1995 cohorts in an attempt to discern significant differences between completers and other categories of students. The characteristics analyzed in this section include gender, ESL designation, severe and mild/moderate disabling conditions, Aboriginal ancestry, home education/home education blended program designation, French Immersion program designation, the Integrated Occupational Program designation, CTS courses, and RAP courses.

GENDER

Much of the literature on school leavers lists gender as a significant factor in high school completion rates. Males have generally been shown to be at greater risk of early school leaving compared with females. In our cohort (Table 2), proportionally more females completed high school on time (58.1% vs 53..6%), and a greater proportion of males were early leavers (35.3% vs. 31.4%). While a chi-square analysis indicates a *significant* relationship between sex and high school status, the *substantive* difference is small.

Table 1 illustrates the time taken to complete high school for both diploma and non-diploma completers. For the combined 1994 and 1995 cohort, 89.6% of students who completed high school did so "on-time" (within three years). There are slightly more on-time completers within the 1995 cohort (91.3% vs. 87.9%). Almost all other completers (9.1%) finish within one additional year. Only 14 students from 1994 were long-term completers, taking more than five years to complete. There were no long-term completers from the 1995 cohort. Less than five percent (4.4%) of the entire two year cohort of 82120 students are long-term continuers, still registered in high school in the second term of 1999. One-third of the combined cohort (27380 students) left school without completing.

Table 1

Completion Status of Students Beginning Grade 10 in 1994 or 1995

Completion Status	Years to Complete	Total Students			% of Completers			% of all Students		
		1994	1995	Total	1994	1995	Total	1994	1995	Total
On-time Completer	**0 - 3 years**	**22271**	**23569**	**45840**	**87.9**	**91.3**	**89.6**	**54.8**	**56.8**	**55.8**
Late Completer	3.5	1155	1020	**2175**	4.6	3.9	**4.3**	2.8	2.5	**2.6**
	4	1247	1191	**2438**	4.9	4.6	**4.8**	3.1	2.9	**3.0**
	4.5	275	45	**320**	1.1	0.2	**0.6**	0.7	0.7	**0.4**
	5	364	0	**364**	1.4	0.0	**0.7**	0.9	0.0	**0.4**
	3.5 – 5 years	**3041**	**2256**	**5297**	**12.0**	**8.7**	**10.4**	**7.5**	**5.4**	**6.5**
Long-term Completer	**5.5**	**14**	**0**	**14**	**0.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
All Completers		25326	25825	**51151**	100	100	**100**	62.3	62.2	**62.3**
Continuer		1004	2585	**3589**				2.5	6.2	**4.4**
Leaver		14295	13085	**27380**				35.2	31.5	**33.3**
All Students		**40625**	**41495**	**82120**				**100**	**100**	**100**

DEMOGRAPHIC AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

This section of the report examines demographic and educational program characteristics of the 1994 and 1995 cohorts in an attempt to discern significant differences between completers and other categories of students. The characteristics analyzed in this section include gender, ESL designation, severe and mild/moderate disabling conditions, Aboriginal ancestry, home education/home education blended program designation, French Immersion program designation, the Integrated Occupational Program designation, CTS courses, and RAP courses.

GENDER

Much of the literature on school leavers lists gender as a significant factor in high school completion rates. Males have generally been shown to be at greater risk of early school leaving compared with females. In our cohort (Table 2), proportionally more females completed high school on time (58.1% vs 53..6%), and a greater proportion of males were early leavers (35.3% vs. 31.4%). While a chi-square analysis indicates a *significant* relationship between sex and high school status, the *substantive* difference is small.

Table 2[1]
Completion status by gender

Completion status	Sex		Total
	Female	**Male**	
On-time completer	23768 (58.1%)	22072 (53.6%)	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	2553 (6.2%)	2744 (6.7%)	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	10 (0%)	4 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	1748 (4.3%)	1841 (4.5%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	12832 (31.4%)	14548 (35.3%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	40911 (100%)	41209 (100%)	82120 (100%)

[1] Pearson Chi-Square = 181.086, df = 4, p = .000

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Of all 2564 students who had ever been enrolled in an ESL program, 39.7% had completed high school on time (Table 3). This compared with over half of students (56.3%) who were never enrolled in ESL. In addition, a slightly greater proportion of ESL students had left high school compared with those who had never taken ESL (39.9% vs. 33.1%).

Table 3[1]
Completion status by ESL designation

Completion status	ESL designation		Total
	Y	**N**	
On-time completer	1019 (39.7%)	44821 (56.3%)	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	307 (12.0%)	4990 (6.3%)	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	0 (0%)	14 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	214 (8.3%)	3375 (4.2%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	1024 (39.9%)	26356 (33.1%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	2564 (100%)	79556 (100%)	82120 (100%)

[1] Pearson Chi-Square = 378.450, df = 4, p = .000

DISABLING CONDITIONS

Table 4 presents the disability status of students in our cohort, classified by their high school completion status. The literature on early school leavers has noted that disability is related to early school leaving, and our analysis appears to support this. There is a significant and a substantive relationship between mild/moderate disability status and high school completion status. More than half of the students coded as being mildly or moderately disabled (51.7%) had left school, while less than one-third of such students (29.6%) had completed on time. A similar pattern prevails when students with a severe disabling condition are examined. Almost half of these students had left school early (48.4%), and approximately one-third (34.2%) had completed. Some caution needs to be exercised when drawing conclusions based on the mild/moderate disability exceptional codes, however, since data evaluation reveals that these codes are not completely internally consistent, nor are they consistently applied across schools jurisdictions.

Table 4
Completion status by Disabling condition

Completion status	Disabling condition			Total[3]
	Mild/moderate[1]	Severe[2]	**No disabling condition**	
On-time completer	1052 (29.6%)	317 (34.2%)	44507	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	305 (8.6%)	81 (8.7%)	4929	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14	14 (0%)
Continuer	359 (10.1%)	80 (8.6%)	3176	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	1834 (51.7%)	448 (48.4%)	25188	27380 (33.3%)
All students	3550 (100%)	926 (100%)	77814	82120 (100%)

[1] Includes students who have ever had the following exceptional codes: trainable mentally disabled, educable mentally disabled, emotional/behavioural disability, learning disabled, hearing impairment, visual impairment, speech and language impairment, physical/mental disability, multiple disability.

[2] Includes students who have ever had the following exceptional codes: severely handicapped child, severe mental disability, severe emotional/behavioural disability, severe multiple disability, severe physical or medical disability, deafness, blindness.

[3] Total may not equal to the sum of the three prior columns, since some students are coded both as mild/moderate and as severely disabled.

ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY

Aboriginal ancestry is strongly related to high school completion patterns, as shown in Table 5. Almost two-thirds of students with Aboriginal ancestry (64.7%) had left high school without graduating, while only 15.2% of Aboriginal students were on time completers. Of all the demographic and educational characteristics examined here, however, the proportion of students continuing their high school education is highest for the Aboriginal ancestry category (13.6%). Two important considerations must be borne in mind when examining Aboriginal ancestry. One is that Alberta Learning is currently unable to identify all Aboriginal students; the criteria noted in Table 4 for identifying Aboriginal students should therefore be treated as a proxy only.[4] Secondly, to note a relationship between Aboriginal ancestry and completion status does not imply causation; Aboriginal ancestry is related to other educational and socio-economic characteristics, and it is all of these factors together which place Aboriginal students at greater risk of school leaving.

---

[4] As an approximation of the extent of our underestimation of the Aboriginal population, the total number of Aboriginal persons aged 15-19 years of age in Alberta, according to the 1996 Census, was 11810.

Table 5
Completion status by Aboriginal ancestry

Completion status	Aboriginal ancestry[1]		Total
	Y	N	
On-time completer	**289 (15.2%)**	**45551 (56.8%)**	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	122 (6.4%)	5175 (6.5%)	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	2 (0%)	12 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	258 (13.6%)	3331 (4.2%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	1230 (64.7%)	26150 (32.6%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	1901 (100%)	80219 (100%)	82120 (100%)

[1] Aboriginal ancestry is imperfectly identified by either of the following two criteria: (1) whether the student ever had either two enrollment codes – 330-Indian student for whom jurisdiction receives federal funding; 340-Registered Indian not living on crown land; (2) whether the student had ever been enrolled in a band school.

HOME EDUCATION/HOME EDUCATION BLENDED

There is considerable debate regarding the academic achievement of students who are home educated. Table 6 reveals that more than half of all students in our cohort who had either a home education or home education blended program grant program code had left high school. Only one in five of the home education students (21.3%) had completed on time, compared with 56.9% of students who had never received funding for home education. Again, no causal specifications can be derived from the data presented in these tables, and we are unable to draw any significant conclusions regarding home education students without further analysis.

Table 6
Completion status by home education designation

Completion status	***Home Education/Home Education Blended Program***		***Total***
	Y	N	
On-time completer	532 (21.3%)	45308 (56.9%)	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	252 (10.1%)	**5045 (6.3%)**	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	4 (0.2%)	10 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	311 (12.4%)	3278 (4.1%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	1401 (56.0%)	25979 (32.6%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	2500 (100%)	80219 (100%)	82120 (100%)

FRENCH IMMERSION

Having ever registered in a French immersion program is associated with a significantly greater chance of completing on time. As evident from Table 7, more than four-fifths of students (81%) who had ever been registered in a French immersion program had completed on time. Only 11.3% of French immersion students had left school early, compared with one-third of students (34.4%) who had never had a French immersion program designation. As with the other characteristics in this analysis, we cannot determine what it is precisely about the French immersion program that gives rise to the relationship noted here. Enrolling in a French immersion program is associated with many other familial and educational factors that impact student achievement, and ultimately, high school completion. It is thus best conceptualized as a proximate determinant, as opposed to an underlying factor.

Table 7
Completion status by French immersion program designation

Completion status	*French Immersion Program*		*Total*
	Y	N	
On-time completer	3127 (81.0%)	42713 (54.6%)	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	193 (5.0%)	**5104 (6.5%)**	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	1 (0%)	13 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	103 (2.7%)	3486 (4.5%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	436 (11.3%)	26944 (34.4%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	3860 (100%)	78260 (100%)	82120 (100%)

INTEGRATED OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAM

Table 8 classifies completion status by IOP designation. The Integrated Occupational Program is a five-year program that begins in the Grade 8 year of schooling and continues through the Grade 12 year of schooling. It is for students who demonstrate reading, writing, computational and other levels of achievement below those of their age peers. To qualify for a Certificate of Achievement, IOP students must earn a minimum of 80 credits. Compared with students never having had an IOP grant program code, students in IOP were almost twice as likely to have left high school early (32.6% vs 61.1%). And about half as many IOP students, proportionally, had completed on time (24.4%) compared with non-IOP students (56.6%).

Table 8
Completion status by Integrated Occupational Program[1] designation

Completion status	***Integrated Occupational Program***		***Total***
	Y	N	
On-time completer	490 (24.2%)	45350 (56.6%)	45840 (55.8%)
Late completer	134 (6.6%)	**5163 (6.4%)**	5297 (6.5%)
Long-term completer	1 (0%)	13 (0%)	14 (0%)
Continuer	**163 (8.0%)**	3426 (4.3%)	3589 (4.4%)
Early leaver	1239 (61.1%)	26141 (32.6%)	27380 (33.3%)
All students	2027 (100%)	80093 (100%)	82120 (100%)

[1] To qualify for a Certificate of Achievement, Integrated Occupational Program students must earn a minimum of 80 credits.

CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES (CTS) / REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (RAP)

Table 9 lists the average number of course completions, and the number of students taking courses, for the CTS and RAP course subject areas. While there is a statistically significant relationship between average CTS course completions and high school status, the differences among the categories are minimal. There is no significant relationship between average RAP course completions and high school status, and only 456 students in our cohort had any RAP course completions. While there may be other educational characteristics which differentiate among high school status, the number of CTS and RAP courses are not related in any important way to completions status.

Table 9
Completion status by CTS and RAP course completions

Completion status	***Average Number of Cts Course Completions***	***Average number of RAP course completions***
On-time completer	4.0 (N=36589)	5.1 (N=243)
Late completer	5.2 (N=4623)	5.8 (N=48)
Long-term completer	4.3 (N=9)	0 (N=0)
Continuer	5.7 (N=3076)	5.1 (N=28)
Early leaver	3.4 (N=14327)	4.8 (N=137)
All students	4.1 (N=58624)	5.1 (N=456)

REGISTRATION FLOW PATTERNS

Students were categorized into one of the following registration patterns, based on whether they were registered continuously or discontinuously:

- C1— Registration for one school year;
- C2 — Continuous registration for two school years;
- C3 — Continuous registration for three school years;
- C4 — Continuous registration for four school years;
- C5 — Continuous registration for five school years;
- D — Discontinuous registration
- NR — Not registered

There is no consistent pattern between whether students were continuously vs. Discontinuously registered and their student status. This is primarily because students who had discontinuous registrations comprised only 3.8% of the entire cohort. In contrast, 78.9% of students in the cohort were continuously registered for four, five or six years.
Course information

COURSE STREAMS

An analysis was undertaken to test the hypothesis that students completing 14 and 24 stream core courses are more likely to leave high school because they perceive a lack of meaningful course offerings at the 30 level. There are various ways that this proposition can be tested, but the results of one such combination of courses is presented in table 10. A total of 4,248 students from the original cohort had passed the following four courses: math 14, math 24, science 14, and science 24. Of these students, over 40% had left school early, while only 35.5% went on to become on-time completers. This compares with 55.8% of the entire cohort which were on-time completers (see table 1).

Although there are many other factors which are germane to this discussion, there seems to be some initial evidence to support the idea that designing 34 level courses would encourage these students to complete a third year of high school and meet graduation requirements, as some school principals have suggested.

Table 10
Completion status by 14 and 24 stream course completions

Completion status	Students passing Math 14, Math 24, Science 14, and Science 24
On-time completer	1506 (35.5%)
Late completer	498 (11.7%)
Long-term completer	1 (0.0%)
Continuer	483 (11.4%)
Early leaver	1760 (41.4%)
All students	4248 (100%)

COURSE AVERAGE, COURSES FAILED, AND CREDITS EARNED

Table 11 presents information on the average obtained by students in all courses, as well as the number of courses failed and credits earned. There are few surprises here. As a group, students who completed on time failed an average of only 0.9 courses each, whereas early school leavers failed, on average, almost 4 courses each. Long-term completers and continuers failed, on average 5.0 and 6.6 courses each, respectively. The highest overall course average was obtained by on-time completers, at 72.1%. Early leavers had the lowest overall course average, at 58.5%. As expected, on-time completers had also earned the most credits, on average (114). In contrast, early leavers had earned only 51 credits. Whatever other factors are relevant to early school leaving, relatively poorer academic performance does seem to place a student at greater risk of early school leaving.

Table 11
Completion status by course average, courses failed, and credits earned

Completion status	Course Average (All Course Completions)	Average number of courses failed	Average number of credits earned
On-time completer	72.1 % (N= 45840)	0.9 (N= 45840)	114 (N= 45840)
Late completer	65.4 % (N= 5297)	3.8 (N=5297)	109 (N=5297)
Long-term completer	66.5 % (N=14)	5.0 (N=14)	109 (N=14)
Continuer	59.9 % (N=3589)	6.6 (N=3589)	77 (N=3589)
Early leaver	58.5 % (N= 27379)	3.8 (N=27379)	51 (N=27379)
All students	66.6 % (N=82119)	2.3 (N=82119)	91 (N=82119)

SCHOOL/AUTHORITY CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL SIZE / URBAN-RURAL SCHOOL STATUS

No substantive relationship was discovered between the completion status of students and the size of the school (indicated by the school population), nor between completion status and whether the school was rural or urban.

JURISDICTION TYPE

Caution must be exercised when drawing comparisons between jurisdictions when it comes to school completion data, since mobility into and out of jurisdictions complicates the completion picture. Table 12 presents a comparison of the percentage of school leavers and the percentage of on-time completers for the different jurisdiction categories. Jurisdictions classified as other had the highest percentage of its students leaving school early, while the lowest percentage was obtained for schools in separate jurisdictions.

Table 12
Percent of early school leavers and on-time completers by jurisdiction type

Jurisdiction type	Number of Students	Percent of early school leavers	Percent of on-time completers
Other[1]	5100	63.2	28.9
Private	2881	49.1	42.6
Public	59270	30.6	58.2
Francophone	152	30.3	63.8
Separate	13896	27.5	61.3
All jurisdictions	81299	32.8	56.4

[1] Includes charter schools, band operated schools, federal jails, ECS private operators, and provincial other schools.

APPENDIX B - POTENTIAL ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

A Survey of Attitudes Toward Human Rights and Toward Self in Alberta Schools: Technical Report, Alberta Education, Edmonton, 1993.

Culture Free Self Esteem Inventory – Nyberg Consultants Ltd. Evaluation of Alberta START Projects: Provincial Perspectives, Final Report, 1995.

Dean Alienation Scale – Dean D. Alienation: Its meaning and Measurement. American Sociological Review, 26, 753-758, 1961.

Pupil Attitude Questionnaire – An Empirical Study of Client Alienation in the Bureaucratic Organization – Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Henry Kolesar, University of Alberta, 1967.

Pupil Attitude Questionnaire II – Pupil Control Ideology and Student Alienation in Northern Alberta. Unpublished Masters Thesis, John Burger, University of Alberta. 1974.

9 to 19: Crucial Years for Self-Esteem in Children and Youth. James Battle, Special Child Publications, Seattle, Washington. 1987.

Student Background and Attitude Survey – Dale G. Romanik and Christie A. Blazer. Reasons for Dropping Out of School and Assessment of Risk Factors: A Comparison of Dropouts, 'At Risk' and 'Regular' Students. Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida, 1990.

APPENDIX C – FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS AND CATEGORIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Focus Group Sponsor	Participants
Aboriginal Youth and Family Well-Being and Education Society	Program Directors, Teacher, Counselor, returning students
Aboriginal Youth Peer Support Group	Former Aboriginal drop outs
Boyle Street Education Centre – Charter School for Children at Risk	Counselor, administrator, teachers, youth worker
Calgary Catholic School District	Administrators, counselor, teachers, parents, student
Calgary Public School District	Administrators, counselor, post-secondary administrator
Conseil Scolaire du Centre-Nord No.	Parents, teachers, school trustees, administrator, student
Edmonton Catholic School District (St. Joe's High School)	Student, parent, counselor, Native parent/counselor
Edmonton Public School District (2 focus groups)	Student, principals, counselors,
Edmonton South Young Offenders Probation Office	Youth on probation in the community,
Edmonton South Young Offenders Probation Office	Parents of youth on probation in the community, or in custody
Edmonton Young Offenders Centre	Youth in Custody
Fort McMurray School Division	Teachers, students, private sector
Gift Lake	Notes of meeting between students and superintendent.
High Prairie School Division (Kinuso)	Students, Community Learner Facilitator, Members of the Native Community, principal and teachers.
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division	Students, teachers, parents
Lethbridge School Division	Administrators, counselor, teachers and students
NorQuest College	Adult Learners, college staff
Northern Lights School Division	Parents, teachers, central office administrators, community members
Northland School Division Board	Trustees, central office administration
Portage College	Adult Learners, college staff
Prairie Rose School Division	Administrators and counselors
Wild Rose School Division	Administrators

APPENDIX D – FOCUS GROUP CODING FRAMEWORK AND SUMMARY

Coding Framework:

- Stds (students)
    - Age (items related to students age)
    - Self (self-knowledge)
    - Affect (items related to students feelings or affect)
    - Label (special education labelling)
    - Work (work loads)
    - Career (career path awareness)
    - Track (tracking system)
    - Drugs or alcohol (use of or access to)
    - Sups (direct supports for students)

- Staff
    - Caring (or the lack thereof)
    - Coord (coordination among)
    - pd (professional development needs)
    - Expct (expectations for student success or failure)
    - Power (power struggles with students)
    - Acct (accountability, teacher evaluation)
    - Diag (diagnosis of students learning styles, at-riskness, etc.)

- Prog (Program)
    - Early (early intervention)
    - Flex (flexible programming including choice, individualization or continuous progress)
    - Coop (co-operative education programs with a heavy emphasis on career paths)
    - Outrch (comments on the outreach program)
    - Calm (comments on CALM program)
    - Multi (programming based on concepts of multiple intelligences)
    - Times (need for flexibility in the times available to students to access programs)
    - Trans (junior-senior high transition issues)
    - Plar (prior learning and achievement recognition)
    - Iop (comments on the IOP program)
    - Rel (relevance)
    - Rap (comments on RAP and or Tech Prep programs)

- Funds
    - Class (comments on class size)
    - Sups (funding needed for student supports)
    - Rap (funding levels for the RAP program)

- Com (community)
    - Fam (family issues)
    - Mentr (mentoring and role models)
    - Skep (skepticism that Alberta Learning can effect improvement to the ESL rate)
    - Part (partnerships; e.g. with respect to student attendance)

Coding Summary:

1. Is premature school leaving a problem in your community?		
Family problems at home have an impact at school	Com-fam	Ayfw
Poverty and struggles impact; there is a sense of hopelessness and a "what for?" attitude	Com-fam	Ayfw
Society seems to under value education/schooling	Com-fam	Bss
Students tend to model the "drop out" behavior of family members, peer and significant others.	Com-fam	Bss
Cliff:/Principal: citizenship of belonging in a school community is important to our students. If students can not express themselves freely these students will not have a sense of belonging. Cliff indicated school counsellor in the school systems tend not to liaison in the home where there are social issues in the family. Our staff have built a relationship with the student in the school and home environment. We believe education does not just happen in the school it is in the home where it is modeled by the parents.	Com-fam	Bss
Cliff:/Principal: citizenship of belonging in a school community is important to our students. If students can not express themselves freely these students will not have a sense of belonging. Cliff indicated school counsellor in the school systems tend not to liaison in the home where there are social issues in the family. Our staff have built a relationship with the student in the school and home environment. We believe education does not just happen in the school it is in the home where it is modeled by the parents.	Com-fam	Bss
Premature school leaving: major problem with on time completion	Com-fam	Eps2
T: - lost generation for parenting skills - education is not valued by parents like it used to be	Com-fam	Hfsd
T: - change has to involve community and parents - need to educate parents and the community - Who's job is it to go out in the community to teach parenting skills? If we can answer this, we may see a change in the *next* generation (i.e. we may see changes in the longer them as a result of implementing these policies, but they will *not* show up in short-term completion rate increases)	Com-fam	Hfsd
Glen: Students who don't value education usually are not supported in the home environment.	Com-fam	Hpsd
Problems in home	Com-fam	Llb
Especially among native families where parents are not educated themselves – no encouragement to stay in school	Com-fam	Llb
Need only two things to be a student: address and guardian. Sometimes those are not present!	Com-fam	Leth
T: - generational behaviour pattern – behaviour is patterned after poor parental behaviour – leads to dysfunction	Com-fam	Norq
- students have entire family "invested" in completion, indicates that barriers to education carry over from generation to generation	Com-fam	Norq
- behind in reading skills from middle school (parents don't have time to read these days, and not willing to put in the time)	Com-fam	Nlsd
Value of education not always recognized by parents	Com-fam	Nsd
Language is less a barrier today	Com-fam	Nsd

no clear attendance policy in some schools some schools will not bother to contact parents unless they ask automated system (for keeping track of students) not completely effective	Com-fam	Pyc
generational issues kids living in homes where education not valued, or where parents uneducated many parents don't care / are uninvolved and this does make a difference	Com-fam	Pyc
parents can't start caring in high school parents have to start being involved in *early* years	Com-fam	Pyc
On the other hand there are parents who have had bad experiences and influences in their own education may not be eager to support their child's education. Ethel a parent tells her story of how she was discipline was conducted in a residential school. Her experiences were negative and when she asked questions to her authority she was treated as defying the rules of authority. From her own experiences she vowed that she would guide and protect her children in education to ensure they do not have the same experiences that she had.	Com-fam	Stjo
Principal indicated Alberta Learning and the government are too focused on results oriented and performance measures and at looking at the process of learning. Government looks at funding first before they look at students.	Com-skep	Bss
T/ Government a problem – want good test results. My daughter has a low level of reading and I was asked to keep the child at home the day of a test so that the test results would be higher.	Com-skep	Bss
Principle suggested that we make ourselves aware of the "Attendance Board" focus group results as their findings may be relevant. Group was interested in how the Fort Mc area and Alberta compared with rest of province and other jurisdictions regarding 70% completion rate. Good representation: Principle, Counselor, Work Ex Coordinator, parent, three current students, one student from a second chance school, and two employers (McDonalds and Canadian Tire).	Com-skep	Fmac
- there may always be a core group of students who do not complete high school - NorQuest is unmatched in the province in terms of intervention strategies for youth – doesn't matter how many times you intervene, completion will always be a problem	Com-skep	Norq
30-35 class size – increased cliques created	Funds-class	Cc
- class size too large - teachers are overloaded - class size an issue, especially in lower grades	funds-class	nlsd
Lack of funding for support services	Funds-sups	Bss
System marginalizes the marginal student, not supportive to these students, funding structure does not fit them and kids pick this up.	Funds-sups	Leth
T: - make CTS more relevant to students - tell them what the knowledge will lead to - make some employability portfolios and include the skills learned by students	Prog-coop	Hfsd
T: - clear relationship exists between labour fortunes and school leaving - students do return - booming economy can be an upside as well, because students need to return to upgrade technical skills – i.e. the relationship between labour and education works *both* ways	Prog-coop	Norq
- notion of "success" needs to be re-visited - students on the margins would be institutionalized, given their problems, if they were part of middle-class, mainstream society	Prog-coop	Nlsd

Options/choices are often too limited – e.g. CTS – shops	Prog-coop	Nsd
Not catching child at a young age re: difficulties. They start to hate school	Prog-early	Llb
No intervention early	Prog-early	Llb
T: - barriers identified in early years - pre-readiness issue	Prog-early	Nlsd
- lack of attention paid in early years to reading and writing skills	prog-early	nlsd
Motivation to succeed must begin in younger grades.	Prog-flex	Pyc
Schools need to be flexible, open to drop outs	Prog-flex	Bss
Principal advocates that there must be flexibility in the school system to allow students who encounter problems and leave school for personal reasons that ensure there is opportunity for students to return. School should be a privilege not a right.	Prog-flex	Bss
traditional structure – need flexibility	Prog-flex	Cc
learning styles not always addressed	Prog-flex	Cc
- 69 mandatory credits currently, as opposed to 40-odd previously - this provides less flexibility	Prog-flex	Hfsd
Why? Alternatives are better than mainstream school	Prog-flex	Leth
Alternative School is easier, they have time to help you, they have all day.	Prog-flex	Leth
- large proportion of students do not complete first time – need to try 2 or 3 times	Prog-flex	Norq
T: - students are focussed on diploma requirements and 100 credits, and not on other alternatives like GED ·	Prog-flex	Norq
- we're forcing students into academic route whether they need it or not	Prog-flex	Nlsd
Need more flexible curriculum based on students' "intelligences" Curriculum is for 'main stream' (academic kids) Curriculum needs to be more flexible with respect to student's interests	Prog-flex	Nsd
Summer School gives students a way to complete a few courses without a full year.	Prog-flex	Prsd
Program delivery of self-paced learning gives students opportunities to have some flexibility and focus in student's goals who want to pursue their education. Aboriginal students use a different approach that is supportive and there is guidance of the student's immediate family or extended family. The student must take responsibility and ownership of his/her own learning and will seek advice to overcome his/her own obstacles.	Prog-flex	Stjo
S: - IOP - lots of early leavers because they don't see the relevance of IOP - students are socially maladjusted	Prog-iop	hfsd
Option of Outreach may keep students from leaving - completing in another way	Prog-outrch	Prsd
- RAP is a good idea, but IOP doesn't support RAP (i.e. IOP courses can't really be used as a tie in to RAP)	Prog-rap	hfsd
- rap is seen as positive	Prog-rap	nlsd
School is not relevant to many students	Prog-rel	Bss
After grade 9 drop out reasons: Pregnancy Fear of high school Don't know why they are in specific courses Lack of appropriate program	Prog-rel	Bss
T: - reasons – tired teachers, the School Act, no one taking steps to find appropriate programs for students	Prog-rel	bss
some non-academic courses not placed on same level as academic	Prog-rel	Cc
options for non-academic courses need to be looked at	Prog-rel	Cc

Schools have not changed significantly to keep up with the changes in young people.	Prog-rel	Leth
- curriculum lacks relevance - trouble with reading/English skills	Prog-rel	Nlsd
- his kids said high school is useless	Prog-rel	Nlsd
Education not often seen as relevant re: what they want to do Kids interests are often not reflected in the curriculum	Prog-rel	Nsd
S: back to alternative programs because students often lack the routine to go to regular school and also there is black mark against them in regular schools once they drop out.	Prog-times	bss
T: - in small schools, the "timetable is the timetable is the timetable" – there is a lack of flexibility to offer all the courses they would like to offer - work experience students find timetable as inflexible in meeting their needs - has to be more flexibility, especially in smaller schools	Prog-times	Hfsd
Yes, in District 51, kids are not called "drop-outs" but "stop-outs" (drop-ins) don't fit "definition"	Prog-times	Leth
Sometimes students have better things to do Where to live What to eat Survival things	Prog-times	Leth
Grade 10 is too different from junior high and so is the nature of high school. It can be scary, too big, intimidating	Prog-trans	Ayfw
Students are hurried along when not ready; pushed along through their grades without passing	Prog-trans	Ayfw
Transition from grade 9 to high school – traumatic- Grade 9 dropouts common	Prog-trans	Bss
Pressure of new curriculum in grade 10 (e.g. grade 10 math)	Prog-trans	Bss
Too many social passes	Prog-trans	Bss
high school level have 13 level not at junior high – should look at levels	Prog-trans	Cc
T: - problems are showing up early (i.e. grade 8)	prog-trans	Hfsd
T: - real disjuncture between grade 9 and high school	Prog-trans	Hfsd
T: - reason students attending NorQuest is *because* non-completion *is* a problem	Prog-trans	Norq
P/T: - grade 9 is set up for 10-20-30 route, and is a difficult year - students showing up in Outreach schools - stress level high in grade 9	Prog-trans	Nlsd
- grade 9 is the breaking point for many	Prog-trans	Nlsd
At grade 8 level, student have to leave the community – many choose not to leave	Prog-trans	Nsd
Junior high students unprepared for high school — pushed through the system too quickly	Prog-trans	Pyc
Not enough accountability by schools	Staff-acct	Bss
achievement tests putting pressure on teachers	Staff-acct	Cc
- felt teachers didn't do their job in teaching reading skills	Staff-acct	Nlsd
Need to improve standards within NSD schools also	Staff-acct	Nsd
Once students have dropped out, school tend not to want them back Focus on achievement test results – lower achievers lower school results average	Staff-caring	Bss
Schools should become more student focussed	Staff-caring	Bss
Schools need to cultivate sense of belonging	Staff-caring	Bss
Schools need to recognize importance of all individual students	Staff-caring	Leth
Marginalized = students not rewarded for what they do/only "appropriate" behaviours are rewarded.	Staff-caring	Leth

Schools sometimes aren't able to follow through with attendance policies — schools say it is not their job, and their too busy schools are very concerned about attendance until Sept 30 because it is tied to funding	Staff-caring	Pyc
Child welfare workers not working as partners with youth workers	Staff-coord	Bss
Schools "over label" students	Staff-expct	Bss
Curtis and Dusty felt school systems should drop the Black mark so students can go back to school system. My brother is going into home schooling as early as 11 years old that should not be happening. The system is failing us.	Staff-expct	Bss
Mayor: - there is a bias toward girls in the schools	Staff-expct	Nlsd
Teachers often hold low expectations for students in receptor schools	Staff-expct	Nsd
Schools should become more sensitive to cultural diversity	Staff-pd	Bss
Some students are put down in front of other students or humiliated	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Students are afraid or embarrassed to ask for help	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Youth think it is "cool" to drop out of school	Stds-affect	Bss
Schools monotonous	Stds-affect	Bss
youth don't have a vision of the future, don't have a view of the future – can work and get money no sense of direction/reality society says money is a great thing	Stds-affect	Cc
students don't feel connected to the school	Stds-affect	Cc
students need to take ownership – process of learning – why are we learning, what are we teaching – process becomes meaningless to students	Stds-affect	Cc
Impact is significant.	Stds-affect	Eps2
- belief system that going to avc is part of the process of high school completion - no sense that there is a defined time process to complete	Stds-affect	Hfsd
T: - grade 9 students are scared of high school for various reasons	stds-affect	hfsd
Students have no one to go to	Stds-affect	Llb
Way the question is put indicates that judgement assigned. Not being in school is better option than mainstream school or temporarily not being in school but it is judged, kids are pressured.	Stds-affect	Leth
Completing High School is hard, would rather be doing it on my own than in a classroom.	Stds-affect	Leth
Factors in school tend to marginalize people; emphasis on athletes, honour students.	Stds-affect	Leth
Cliqueiness among students isolate certain individuals	Stds-affect	Leth
Difficult for students to ask for help because they are seen as "stupid" or they feel "stupid"	Stds-affect	Leth
T: - students between the ages of 20-29 are vulnerable - lack of backup sitters - attendance policy – requires some to withdraw - 1st semester is the most difficult - adjustment issues are most prevalent, lifestyle adjustment in particular	Stds-affect	Norq
T/Parent: – not graduating a problem not just in terms of work, but also self-esteem	Stds-affect	Norq
- lifestyle issues are a problem	Stds-affect	Norq
T: - students don't know how to budget and are living beyond their means	Stds-affect	Norq
- little or no participation in extracurricular activities	Stds-affect	Nlsd

- personal issues - coping skills and poverty	Stds-affect	Nlsd
P: - aboriginal students - have cultural barriers	Stds-affect	Nlsd
T: - personal issues - kids have enormous challenges just to survive	Stds-affect	Nlsd
- asked (as teacher) approx. 100 grade 10, 11, 12 students: Why do students drop out? 1. jobs and money issues 2. lack of motivation and lack of goals - they can't *yet* see the purpose of school 3. poor grades and poor self-esteem leading to frustration with school - more minor issues were drug and alcohol problems, problems at home, and single parent issues	Stds-affect	Nlsd
Teacher – home – community -- students may experience racism	Stds-affect	Nsd
Often kids are not ready when they have to go out of the community for high school	Stds-affect	Nsd
expelling students doesn't work	Stds-affect	Pyc
discrimination is still a factor schools are ghettoized according to various subcultures schools have "reputations" and students are aware of these reputations	Stds-affect	Pyc
Guy (counsellor) mentioned a quiet, shy, young,18 yr old student who had attended Fresh Start an alternative program is now attending St. Joes high. The First Nation student came from a rural community to city and the family had moved to different places in a short period of time within the city> The student found it to be very hard adjusting to the school and city environment. The student eventually came to St Joes High school in self paced prrgram that has been success for the student's self esteem and school work performance.	Stds-affect	Stjo
problem because of type of student is leaving students without skills leaving disadvantaged/disenchanted kids	Stds-affect	Wrsd
Why did they go back:	Stds-age	Bss
S/ more mature, got life together - high school dropout rate is a misnomer – we're really talking about a middle school dropout rate	Stds-age	Nlsd
- hard to make connection between courses and real life	Stds-career	Hfsd
T: - high school is too late to do career planning – need to start in grade 7 **S:** - it would make sense to do career planning at an earlier stage	Stds-career	Hfsd
T: - lack of direction in high school (i.e. Science 10 / Science 14)	Stds-career	Nlsd
- dissatisfied with counseling	Stds-career	Nlsd
Tylor felt that drugs and alcohol has a influence on students/peers and it affects their schoolwork and attendance. Eventually students would drop out of school.	Stds-drugs	Hpsd
- lack of self-esteem / drug use	stds-drugs	nlsd
- drug/alcohol problems	Stds-drugs	Nlsd
S/ kids of 11 and 14 are now dropping out. – schools do not know how to take kids back once they have left. **T/** schools do not want "problem child" – child with special needs, often asked to keep child at home at test time.	Stds-label	bss
- teachers tend to label when kids are having trouble - their view is to say, "They can always finish at AVC"	Stds-label	Nlsd
T/ social passes are a problem. Students will have a H/S diploma but are illiterate – My son is 16 years old and cannot read or write – he is going to Ross Shepherd. There is no accountability for social passes in school. I have already been told he probably will not make it – there was some funding in elementary school to help him, but with the change in school there is no funding in junior H/S.	Stds-self	Bss

students moved along without understanding concepts ie math	Stds-self	Cc
Need to meet needs of students but need to ask them what they need Difficult to figure out what students need – even for the students	Stds-self	Leth
T: - grade inflation on the part of students is widespread - amazed that so many students who are skilled have such low literacy levels	Stds-self	Norq
- students adjust expectations in terms of Grade 12 courses they can pass/take	Stds-self	Norq
- math is a major barrier - math requirements is what is keeping students out	Stds-self	Norq
T: - many students returning after an absence have a tremendous gap in math skills/knowledge	Stds-self	Norq
- being passed in courses/grade in earlier years (when they shouldn't be) a detriment	Stds-self	Nlsd
students get promoted without passing courses	Stds-self	Pyc
schools *often* promote students when they shouldn't rationale for promotion: schools want to keep students with their peer group	Stds-self	Pyc
no access to counselors – may exist – in large schools – very little opportunity for interaction.	Stds-sups	Cc
Limited resources for kids in community re: helping them survive.	Stds-sups	Leth
Setting up a boarding school which has helped	Stds-sups	Nsd
The school counsellor felt the students who were struggling needed the supports to overcome their barriers at home or school. Teachers need to look at the students cultural environment and recognize the differences that must be understood and respected for students to feel accepted and encouraged by their peers and school staff members. The school needs to offer some flexibility in order for students who encounter obstacles to have some supports in place to assist them along to ensure the students will be successful in completing their high school.	Stds-sups	Stjo
no one really keeps track of kids in high school	Stds-track	Pyc
Students completing but its not clear with way in which tracking is done – i.e.: students moving onto college and doing upgrading or course completion there.	Stds-track	Prsd
Teacher: Russ responded that economic times for job opportunities are good today. Students can also get training on the jobs that encourage them to stay with the job. April and Joyce agreed.	Stds-work	Hpsd
Economic factors – effects enrolment of adults when jobs are available	Stds-work	Llb
- working 20 or more hours per week prior to leaving	Stds-work	Nlsd
concern escalates/decreases based on economy	Stds-work	Wrsd

2. What is currently being done to help students complete high school?		
Work with parents of students	Com-fam	Cbea
- have liaison officers - all parents get a home visit once a year	Com-fam	Hfsd
Partnership between school and parents is very important.	Com-fam	Stjo
Role models as older siblings, parents	Com-mentr	Ayfw
Hands-on; mentoring	Com-mentr	Cbea
Aboriginal Mentors	Com-mentr	Cbea
Summer mentorship program with Carma (construction)	Com-mentr	Cbea
Children Initiative, United Way and Federal/Provincial/Local; advocacy groups for students/learners	Com-mentr	Cbea

Esther said the school uses the approach of team work helps overcome peer issues. The school uses a holistic approach of the circle to give students an opportunity to speak as an individual about issues and to share good experiences as one group. If there is a crisis there are resource people who are brought into the school to intervene and assist the student to overcome obstacles.	Com-mentr	Hpsd
T: - would like to see 1 person responsible for a cohort of students – i.e. a more direct mentoring relationship would aid retention - *Youth Connections* program – successful in the past - caseload system was tried many years ago, but was not a realistic solution - working towards fine-tuning a case mentoring model	Com-mentr	Norq
Community members need to be supported to become staff	Com-mentr	Nsd
- articulation agreements with industry and with post-secondary	Com-mentr	Nsd
Partnerships with post secondary e.g. CVC's	Com-part	Nsd
Elders council – voices weren't being heard and we learned that to be heard you need the ability to communicate via documents Elders are gaining a degree of appreciation for education	Com-part	Nsd
Community ownership of the schools is slowly developing	Com-part	Nsd
Partnerships Virtual with Rocky View With Medicine Hat Catholic	Com-part	Prsd
Cooperation among agencies that support families	Com-part	Prsd
She also expressed the need for interagencies to work more closely together and to start at an early age.	Com-part	Stjo
schools looking at working with social services to address level	Com-part	Wrsd
smaller class sizes for 13-14 level students	Funds-class	Epsm
Small class size	Funds-class	Prsd
High needs funding supports/keeps schools alive – rather than CEU funding	Funds-sups	Bss
Grants from student finance key to school attendance	Funds-sups	Bss
Principal indicated we have an excellent working relationship with Student Finance who give students access to funding. Eg: young single mothers	Funds-sups	Bss
- greater resources needed in some areas - i.e. more teachers in career prep areas - funding is an issue - schools inherited the cuts made to other departments - 70% high school completion a predictable outcome of funding cuts (though this is *not* something money can fix - the damage has already been done)	Funds-sups	Nlsd
Small high school programs are very expensive	Funds-sups	Nsd
- *Foundations* course – similar to CALM – program whereby cohorts of students move through the system together - aids retention levels (i.e. because there is a sense of belonging, friendship skills, etc.)	prog-affect	Norq
Traditional approach & modular - St. Anne – school to work transition - ie cabinet making @ SAIT - Adult Ed. Program – 2 courses - CTS – 3 credits - obtain skills to challenge pre-apprenticeship programs - relationship with SAIT - Co-op ed	Prog-coop	Cc
Industry partnerships: look at entry level skills	Prog-coop	Cbea
Summer oriented work experience	Prog-coop	Cbea
YMCA partnership to develop leadership skills applicable to camps/playgrounds, etc.	Prog-coop	Cbea

Teacher: Trevor indicated CTS courses give students opportunities for training. Presently Fairview College offers programs that the school has access to for example the farm program gives the student the opportunity to do work experience on a farm in the local area. Russ is planning to look at programs that are available with Olds College.	Prog-coop	Hpsd
Work experience in traditional skills	Prog-coop	Nsd
Hands-on type programs; i.e. Green Certificate	Prog-coop	Prsd
Laura a parent and grandmother is involved in setting up a summer student employment project. She stressed that student s who have been enrolled full in school will be selected for summer employment.	Prog-coop	Stjo
Readiness to learn – Head Start Programs in most communities – 3 ½ yr. olds	Prog-early	Nsd
Catches students young	Prog-early	Prsd
Looking at impact of literacy	Prog-early	Wrsd
Early literacy programs	Prog-early	Wrsd
Run alternative programs now available Charter school differs with Fresh Start in: Being part of a community centre/program More flexibility	Prog-flex	Bss
Measure student success in different ways	Prog-flex	Bss
Boyle Street Charter School is taking a more holistic approach to student learning Using a flexible school year schedule 4 sectors per year each one provides a fresh start for students and for teachers	Prog-flex	Bss
Formal Partnerships with Post-Secondary SAIT/CBE/Calgary Catholic – more formal process	Prog-flex	Cbea
5th on 5th Year round Work at own pace Not so strict time limit Allows you to be a lot more independent A lot of community services attached to it: Social Services Justice Mental health Private Industry	Prog-flex	Leth
- summer school	Prog-flex	Nlsd
Bussing to High Prairie as on option to boarding	Prog-flex	Nsd
- virtual schools - this is good if it's *in* the school, but there were concerns expressed with the lack of social skills of some of these students	Prog-flex	Pyc
Summer school (i.e. year round)	Prog-flex	Prsd
Virtual	Prog-flex	Prsd
Meeting needs of students who have "basic needs" issues i.e.: low socio-economic background	Prog-flex	Prsd

Laurel a single parent has struggled with her 3 sons education. Over the years ,she has had to move to different communities and enroll her sons in a variety of school programs. The barriers she has encounter with her sons in the school was her sons were labelled as a behavior problem in the school before they were diagnosed with a learning disability. She felt special needs placement was not the appropriate learning environment for her son and the result was frustration and to some extent depressed about school. She recommended that schools should be more flexible and supports should be in place to encourage the students with learning disabilities to become successful in their learning. Rural schools has limited resources and she felt it was more difficult for students who need the necessary supports but were not available until she moved to the city and there was more supports available for her sons. Also, she recommended that schools work more closely with parents with an open communication to assist the needs of the students and to look at what strengths students have and to maintain that students need to be challenged in school.	Prog-flex	Stjo
allowed flexibility for students	Prog-flex	Wrsd
counseling/library/extra-curricular/computer offered	Prog-flex	Wrsd
Independent studies program	Prog-flex	Wrsd
Lorelli a single parent has successful completed the high school certificate of achievement and is presently completing her diploma. with the support of her immediate family she has more confidence in setting her own goals in education. today she is a role model in the different programs she is involved in and she shares her experiences and encourages her peers to complete there high school.	Prog-iop	Stjo
The First Nation school program uses a self paced learning that seems to work for the students who are attending on a regular basis. There is also an IOP program offered at the junior high level.	Prog-iop	Stjo
- great success with outreach schools	Prog-ourtch	Nlsd
Community involvement in outreach programs	Prog-outrch	Cc
- some Outreach schools work well	Prog-outrch	Pyc
Outreach	Prog-outrch	Prsd
Junior High Outreach	Prog-outrch	Prsd
Outreach School Program	Prog-outrch	Wrsd
R.A.P. Programs	Prog-rap	Cc
Tech. Prep. Model	Prog-rap	Cbea
- RAP/Work experience - currently, one of the highest rates of RAP participation in the province - tech prep	Prog-rap	Nlsd
RAP	Prog-rap	Prsd
Boyle Street Charter School Schools start later: 9:15 am	Prog-times	Bss
Flexibility of programming to allow for work and other family needs/life needs	Prog-times	Prsd
grade 10 a critical year – transition year	Prog-trans	Epsm
- Math 9/10 transition course - helpful in retaining students - grade 9 teachers are frustrated - students experience change from concrete to abstract curriculum - seen in every subject area - students would do better with 13 level courses in grade 9	Prog-trans	Nlsd
- transition program to ease grade 8 and grade 9 (AISI project)	Prog-trans	Nlsd
pro-active at the junior/senior levels and earlier.	Prog-trans	Wrsd
S: - teachers are in a rush and don't explain things the way they should	Staff-acct	Hfsd
Alternative programs treat students with more respect	Staff-caring	Bss
Teacher advisory role in attendance contracts	Staff-caring	Cc

build sense of community cohort	Staff-caring	Epsm
school has human touch – not treated like a number	Staff-caring	Fma2
T: - develop services to help students - personal issues tend to be more instrumental in early leaving (discipline / family support or lack thereof / peer support or lack thereof)	Staff-caring	Norq
T: - important to recognize bad behaviour	Staff-caring	Norq
T: - attendance contract has helped retention	Staff-caring	Norq
- at the middle school level - advisory programs (teachers and students meet one another)	Staff-caring	Nlsd
Need after school studies where teachers give kids extra help after school	Staff-caring	Nsd
Police officer in school – impact on quick action – safe and caring school	Staff-coord	Cc
LAC (at Portage College) • Own developed programs • Serve about 115 upgrading students per year • 50-60 career training students • 5 ed assistants and Mark • success between 80-85% • work as teams with other areas • case management – helps with accountability	Staff-coord	Llb
T: - students are informed that they need technical skills; schools doing a good job and are much more informed as to what job requirements are "out there" - have a better handle on what's happening in the work community	Staff-coord	Norq
have Junior high school identify at risk kids	Staff-diag	Epsm
At Portage Learning Assistance Centre – help students with learning barriers Counselling centre – help students with personal issues • AADAC • Native elders • Testing to determine needs for learning centre • Career counselling (5 advisors also for financial) • Student advisors – case managers as well	**STAFF-DIAG**	**LLB**
Testing of kids – appropriate placement	Staff-diag	Wrsd
S: - teachers help students who don't need the help, and don't help the students who do - teachers gravitate to the better students	Staff-expct	Hfsd
Teacher's expectation of a student has an impact on the student's learning.	Staff-expct	Stjo
Teacher Resource groups	Staff-pd	Prsd
- parents blame school system when things don't work — schools will sometimes suggest home schooling or push kids into home schooling	Staff-power	Pyc
Student perspective – keeping focused ie through athletics	Stds-affect	Cc

What makes kids want to stay in school? Teachers that make you want to come. Activities that involve students. Teachers that are understanding and concerned. An effective support network. Teachers that are friendly and notice when things go wrong. Availability of alternate programs like Second Chance schools. Customized programs that meet students needs. Students sometimes drop out because they don't fit in. Don't fit in so they start skipping and get into crime.	Stds-affect	Fmac
Community has an incentive program to recognize and reward students who complete	Stds-affect	Nsd
Small schools – you are known	Stds-affect	Prsd
She expressed her concern of the First Nation school students are not completing their high school for reasons of the following: • Teen pregnancy • No motivation/self esteem • Family violence • Drugs/alcohol	Stds-affect	Stjo
Job shadowing	Stds-career	Cbea
Modified Careers 1010 Course	Stds-career	Cbea
Support in language; life and work skills; problem solving	Stds-career	cbea
Alberta Human Resources & Development/Canada Human Resource Development programs for staff/students/adults.	Stds-career	Cbea
School put career development information on line - available on any computer in the school	Stds-career	Hfsd
Esther said the Swan River First Nation school offer career planning at the grade 9 level to give the students a focus and what they want to do and to set a goal once they complete high school. The school environment offers a personal, caring relationship with the students. Complex issues are manifested over time that has an impact on students to change their career. There are opportunities to do individual and group work with students on an ongoing basis to help students who are struggling with school work or issues that is encountered. She further indicated that supports are offered for the students to help them complete their schooling. For example the single parents are able to bring the baby into the school while the mother does the school work.	Stds-career	Hpsd
- important to have career fairs in schools	Stds-career	Norq
- career education program in middle schools, with career awareness in elementary school	Stds-career	Nlsd
Summer high school student employment program	Stds-career	Nsd
Employment opportunities – provide important incentives Work experience very important Rewards for excellence in work experience	Stds-career	Nsd
Goal setting/Career planning	Stds-career	Prsd
Vocational Ed. Programs/Work Experience – full semester/after school hour programs	Stds-career	Wrsd
Career councelling	Stds-career	Wrsd
More of an emphasis on employability programs	Stds-career	Wrsd
- *Just Read* program - students monitor their own reading - works well but only up to high school	Stds-self	Nlsd
-- *Read to Succeed* program - a reading recovery program to bring students back to grade level in reading skills	Stds-self	Nlsd

Lorelei's mother did not understand what it meant when her daughter had learning disabilities and felt if that was more clarified she could have assisted her daughter in the school work.	Stds-self	Stjo
Some parents are not involved in the decision making of their child's program. Decisions are made without the parent support. Schools use funding as a support and tend to label students readily. Concern that schools tend to pass students for the sake of passing them on to the next grade. Their performance is reflected in the achievement test. Or students with special needs are told to stay home on the day the test is administered.	Stds-self	Stjo
It is a Stay-in-School program. Unique program includes tutoring such as helping read the text books and reading instructions, youth workers, partnership with the school, sports, workshops on personal development, cultural awareness (Aboriginal) based on who they are and pride, resources, connecting and networking with community and other resources, family involvement, orientations, encourage the family to feel comfortable, program based on trust and respect. Culture attracts students to the program.	Stds-sups	Ayfw
Fresh Start program where students work on their own pace and have support groups	Stds-sups	Ayfw
In-school tutoring of aboriginal students provided in 4 schools. Three in inner city.	Stds-sups	Ayfw
Breakfast provided free/lunch	Stds-sups	Bss
T: - free after school tutoring available to all students	Stds-sups	Hfsd
T: - after school tutoring a difficulty because students have to take the bus	Stds-sups	Hfsd
- teacher aides are very powerful instruments, especially since it's difficult in a class of 30 for teacher to give individual attention to all students	Stds-sups	Hfsd
Youth centres – help students to maintain interests	Stds-sups	Nsd

Q3/4

Parents need to be visible in schools	Com-fam	Ayfw
Lack of parental support – generational perpetuating cycle	Com-fam	ayps
Parents don't have time today	Com-fam	Ayps
Supports – family is key for going back to school: self determination	Com-fam	Ayps
Adults do no see education as important – develop understanding that education is important for child	Com-fam	Ayps
Need to educate parents	Com-fam	Cbea
Parents as informed partners	Com-fam	Cbea
S: - there will always be school leavers because some families don't encourage high school completion.	Com-fam	Cscn
Telephone the kids at home" computer contacts – no impact	Com-fam	Epsm
Need to educate parents	Com-fam	Epsm
family support is seen as important	Com-fam	Eyoc
Economy leads to dysfunctional families resulting in pregnancies, etc.	Com-fam	Fmac
Good parenting is an important element missing from education.	Com-fam	Fmac
- need to encourage parent participation - parents need to be completely involved in child's life – the only students she knows still in school are those whose parents are directly involved in the child's life	Com-fam	Norq
- society is changing – it seems to have lost its moral compass	Com-fam	Nlsd

More awareness to parents as child's first teachers Parents can be empowered to talk to their kids at an early age about the value of education Parenting skills need greater emphasis Better teacher communication to parents Community liaison contact important – especially for the student attending school outside the home community Parents need the opportunity to demonstrate they care	Com-fam	Nsd
- it is the parent's job to instill core values, but they don't always do it	Com-fam	Pyc
- parents are critical, as is community involvement	Com-fam	Pyc
Family support Way for students to have "time-out" from family; support to family and child	Com-fam	Prsd
- parental control seen as key (in case of M, mother didn't provide any structure, but father does provide structure, and it makes a difference	Com-fam	Espo
Should not have to need a B.Ed. just to be a counselor.	Com-mentr	Ayps
Support groups/talk to youth	Com-mentr	Ayps
Determine high risk students – have more people/counselors talking to students who are at risk – intervention	Com-mentr	Ayps
More role models/mentors	Com-mentr	Ayps
Advocate; mentor; significant adult is a key for every learner	Com-mentr	Cbea
need to identify key mentor(s) for each student	Com-mentr	Epsm
schools should bring in role models – successful (and not so successful, i.e. ex-cons) people to talk about why you should stay in school	Com-mentr	Eyoc
No one for counseling when attending high school	Com-mentr	Glsm
Wanted someone to talk with. Does not want to be dependent on anyone. Needs a good role model.	Com-mentr	Glsm
"Support is what we need, from community, from school"	Com-mentr	Glsm
Need for counsellor, role model in school system, more guidance.	Com-mentr	Llb
Too many kids, teachers, crowds when kids are at a time where they need guidance one on one – need connection (even with adults).	Com-mentr	Leth
Give students support Emotional as well as educational Counseling	Com-mentr	Leth
- counsellors / student advisors	Com-mentr	Norq
T: - volunteers – could be utilized to good effect - tutoring - mentoring - good foundation is crucial - making allowance for other cultural needs - more focus on a holistic approach - pleased that Alberta Learning (AL) is talking to Aboriginal elders (i.e. as part of the Native Policy Review) and getting their opinions	Com-mentr	Norq
An advocate or support the person can turn to over the years Life long learning support network	Com-mentr	Nsd
Mentors in the school would be one support for the teachers	Com-mentr	Stjo
Education, community, business, and industry working together to define skills	Com-part	Cbea

Need education reform that starts today Start now – identify first steps Students need a road map – involving parents and community Need to involve A.T.A. Need support at all levels so initiatives don't die Time is right; need to continue dialogue; action plans Must remember that mistakes will be made, but need safe community that values risk taking We must be about meeting learners needs Potential is here; need to work together	Com-part	Cbea
Need a "public awareness" campaign of education/learning is more than University i.e. if 300 new jobs in Alberta – what are these jobs and what are the qualifications	Com-part	Cbep
What other agencies could provide supports/resources	Com-part	Epsm
Need to build partnerships	Com-part	Epsm
Attendance board does not have any teeth	Com-part	Eps2
Mental health is a serious issue – we don't have enough resources. Educators don't have the skill sets to counsel. We need trained practitioners to provide treatment counselling.	Com-part	Eps2
several youth mentioned there are no consequences for not attending school	Com-part	Eyoc
attendance policy in some cases, it has no teeth schools will threaten, but don't enforce the policy attendance should be more strictly enforced there should be rewards for perfect attendance	Com-part	Eyoc
Partnerships a good idea but resources would be better utilized if centralized at HS.	Com-part	Fmac
- community partnerships, but difficult to maintain - takes a lot of time and effort	Com-part	Hfsd
there has to be more of a buy-in from outside agencies (i.e. mental health) if they want educators to do more Where does the school end and the community begin? **T:** - much more communication with Social Services is needed (i.e. suicidal students that mental health won't tell schools about but schools need to know about this)	Com-part	Hfsd
Decisions need to be made in communities by the people who are at the table here today.	Com-part	Leth
- schools could be modeled on a medieval village or on a family - could include multi-age class groups - need a re-connection between student and school and between community and school	Com-part	Nlsd
Opportunity for elders to be actively involved in the school Community leaders need to be actively supportive and involved in the schools	Com-part	Nsd
Better partnership with First Nations communities and school jurisdictions	Com-part	Stjo
Wider range of expertise helping us to get kids through	Com-part	Wrsd
Principals feel like a "goldfish in a bowl" – they would like to change things but have boundaries.	Com-skep	Leth
Students feel like this too "we don't even have a voice".	Com-skep	Leth
More teachers, smaller classes	Funds-class	Ayfw

Boyle Street Charter School 8 – 10 students per teacher make schools friendlier – more welcoming	Funds-class	Bss
several youth mentioned that classes are too big / there should be a maximum class size class of 10-12 seen as ideal teachers can't provide enough attention / difficult to get teacher's attention	Funds-class	Eyoc
Class sizes need to be smaller to provide individual attention to those that need it.	Funds-class	Fmac
Class size – losing lower end/boring higher end	Funds-class	Llb
Lower teacher/student ratios	Funds-class	Leth
T: - good teacher-student ratio is important, especially in the younger years	Funds-class	Norq
- class sizes are a problem — it is difficult for teachers to do more than they're already doing	Funds-class	Pyc
Differentiate instruction in combination with small class size Need funding for small class size	Funds-class	Prsd
- class size - classes are too big – size of 10 is good	Funds-class	Espo
- when classes are too large, kids get left out	Funds-class	Espo
- i.e. rap – great idea, but you need funds to find employers and make and keep contacts	Funds-rap	Cscn
There are financial constraints; more people need to be hired and more teachers.	Funds-sups	Ayfw
Financial reasons – money for books, can't rely on band, living on res.	Funds-sups	Ayps
Tuition fees need to come down, esp. at university	Funds-sups	Ayps
Clothing status – poverty	Funds-sups	Ayps
Money for native students needs to go to native students – targeted funding	Funds-sups	Ayps
Give incentive to kids who do well (from low-income family)	Funds-sups	Ayps
C/ Minister or AB Learning need to look at funding structures. Children with issues, and the additional pressure to complete courses at a certain time will drop out of school. Funding is the focus. We are the only school addressing drop out issues.	Funds-sups	Bss
Funding – more money now but less in long run; employment at advanced level Funding for counseling, career development person	Funds-sups	Cbep
Funding affects how career/counseling is offered – first to go when funding cuts Government (society) needs to decide how much support (esp. human) they are willing to invest	Funds-sups	Cbep
Stay in school may cost more money – small class size, human resources, specialized programming	Funds-sups	Cbep
Students who need financial assistance/other assistance need linkage to community agencies	Funds-sups	Cc
- need greater human resources in the schools	Funds-sups	Cscn
Need for more resources $$ School resource officer takes $40,000 out of classrooms	Funds-sups	Epsm
Alternative programs are expensive	Funds-sups	Epsm
Need more resources to provide innovative strategies	Funds-sups	Epsm
Teacher morale is low because of limited access to resources to support instruction	Funds-sups	Epsm
fees for extracurricular activities can sometimes act as an exclusionary tactic (students who can't afford the extra fees can feel left out, e.g. sports teams)	Funds-sups	Eyoc
More time/resources (smaller classes, time to phone home, time to talk to students, time to care, resources for counseling, loss of teachers because of cost of living in Fort Mc.)	Funds-sups	Fmac

SFB a problem - students can't get loans because SFB looks. at parental assets, but this doesn't make sense since parents can't just sell something to provide help with education (i.e. asset rich, cash poor parents)	Funds-sups	Hfsd
T: - more money for counseling in schools	Funds-sups	Hfsd
Superintendent: - scholarship funding needs to be drastically restructured needs to be based on *potential* and not based on *achievement* (e.g. it is not fair that one student will receive $20,000 in scholarships, while many others receive nothing) all students should have access to scholarships scholarships act as a stratification system	Funds-sups	Hfsd
1 year out of school before being able to access funds for upgrading - how people fall through cracks	Funds-sups	Llb
SDG –85% of students at Portage College in adult upgrading are under SDP – makes if feasible to return	Funds-sups	Llb
There are so many students that need help and this is tremendously time consuming – there are not enough resources.	Funds-sups	Leth
All the career stuff (e.g.: career transitions, etc – not just money) is an "add on". Goes to the counseling office – need to have the money and programs come to where they are needed.	Funds-sups	Leth
School fees may need to be waived	Funds-sups	Leth
- Student Finance has impossible requirements, i.e. requiring students to have all their bills paid up-to-date	Funds-sups	Norq
- subsidies to students - will lose students in summer and in last 2 weeks of school because funding stops - need a different funding model – current model is not serving adult learners	Funds-sups	Norq
- school finance - support is based on attendance, but it should be based on *progress*	Funds-sups	Pyc
More scholarship incentive – early incentives	Funds-sups	Prsd
Need on-going funding for partnerships that work with children/families.	Funds-sups	Prsd
Access to funding and special needs supports for urban schools. Supports for students who need emotional	Funds-sups	Stjo
CALM – need in junior high – drug awareness, HIV, FAS etc.	Prog-calm	Ayps
- CALM doesn't teach you how to live; it's not practical and requirements are not stringent	Prog-calm	Espo
Interests of learners – must start early in life – training field, early in school career as not everyone will go to university	Prog-coop	Ayps
Need to tailor student programs to strengths and career options	Prog-coop	Ayps
S/ although school is closed after hours there are youth activities, after school activities it depends on what students say they need. School is also a community centre. There are 104 students here – at maximum. We started with 50 went to 79 and now we are over 100. Student achievement has increased. Increase in students writing departmentals, 2 graduates last year. Transition programs – work experience and reap programs	Prog-coop	Bss
Career pathways: curriculum that fits interests/needs	Prog-coop	Cbea
More opportunities for work experience to help learners to understand what work involves	Prog-coop	Cbea

Articulation between CTS/Technical programs needed	Prog-coop	Cbea
Integration of career development into all curriculum	Prog-coop	Cbea
Delivery in a more hands-on manner both in shop/involvement	Prog-coop	Cbep
Get out message to students/society that trades/vocational skills are valued	Prog-coop	Cbep
Provide students with support for "career" that will meet their needs	Prog-coop	Cbep
Idea of Co-op Programs – first to school and then work (10 weeks at a time); reality of what work really involves on ongoing	Prog-coop	Cbep
Need to make connections between work life/career life early!!!	Prog-coop	Cbep
Connections to present: work skills needed; work done – curriculum that fits students needs/ interests and how it does it	Prog-coop	Cbep
Accountability in broader sense meets broader outcomes; (portfolio/outcomes/successes tied to standards) Flexibility in standard – realistic for the job	Prog-coop	Cbep
Portland Model Certificate – School to work relationship – career planning – direction – follow up (School gives diploma – not the state.)	Prog-coop	Cc
- We need to take into account different career routes/tracks – i.e. What about those who go to marvel college [private school offering hairdressing] or work at the local garage? – i.e. There's a narrow definition of completer	Prog-Coop	Cscn
- requirements are too heavy – students are made with different abilities – we need to value the trades, not everyone is cut out for math 10 or science 10 – citizenship is important	Prog-coop	Cscn
Hi: - tech prep needs to be explored — doesn't go as far as rap, but it's a great compromise	Prog-coop	Cscn
- could have something like school-to-work transition which needs to be funded – while it may never be enough from the school's perspective, it at least gives the message to schools that they have to start something	Prog-coop	Cscn
- there should be more articulation programs between high school and technical institutes – we need to move to more of a seamless system	Prog-coop	Cscn
Need to make better connections between school work and workplace learning Use simulations project based work.	Prog-coop	Epsm
work experience courses are liked there should be monetary incentives for taking courses (mention made of parallel with YMCA Enterprise Center)	Prog-coop	Eyoc
Exposure to different life paths. Need to bring real world consequences into the class room.	Prog-coop	Fmac
Russ requesting more supports for the schools especially in the rural schools. There is too much emphasis on post secondary and not enough on trades for students.	Prog-coop	Hpsd
In traditional High School curriculum, inflexible only university route and "other" route -should expand into trades, business, etc. Parents believe University route is the only important one – we do a disservice by selling Universities too much Not a lot of continuity between High School and continuation (trades, jobs, university)	Prog-coop	Leth
- skills program	Prog-coop	Norq
- need greater encouragement of non-university alternatives	Prog-coop	Nlsd
- 14/24 course stream - does not lead to trades or to post-secondary - do we need a middle alternative?	Prog-coop	Nlsd

- work experience must be balanced with life experience - uneasy balance between school and industry - how do we recognize/prepare students who aren't made for the academic route? - We should be fostering not so much specific career rigidity, but the development of a broader skill set that students will be able to use in other areas	Prog-coop	Nlsd
Traditional skills need to be recognized in the school curriculum Youth development for at risk students – e.g. extra-curricular development	Prog-coop	Nsd
Need much stronger work experience linkages with businesses in the area of the home community	Prog-coop	Nsd
- more life skills based training needed - kids at 15 are too young to do career planning	Prog-coop	Pyc
Early career counseling tied to incentives.	Prog-coop	Prsd
Working with/drawing on small business to provide expertise and experience to students.	Prog-coop	Prsd
Serious look at kids who cannot graduate because they can't obtain course credits – ie Social 23. By Alta. Learning - Curriculum	Prog-coop	Wrsd
Choices for courses – less academic courses ie Social Studies By: Alta. Learning, Math 34, Science 34	Prog-coop	Wrsd
Different types of diplomas that address different types of employement – work experience has been expanded	Prog-coop	Wrsd
Educate public on benefits of the trades	Prog-coop	Wrsd
Can we move to an early apprenticeship program Mistake to change diploma to generic diploma Mail out transcripts on back of diploma	Prog-coop	Wrsd
- schools should try to work with kids who want to be employed	Prog-coop	Espo
Intervention courses earlier than high school	Prog-early	Ayps
Literacy is key Non-literacy starts early; early intervention	Prog-early	Cbea
Early learning disability diagnosis	Prog-early	Cbep
Literacy support for those students who need it	Prog-early	Cbep
Need to address what students come to school with: District	Prog-early	Cc
Early prevention/intervention	Prog-early	Epsm
Get children early – primary school	Prog-early	Llb
- early intervention, as early as possible	Prog-early	Norq
- problems begin in early years - readiness issue	Prog-early	Nlsd
Early Intervention – flexibility to meet Grade 5/6 needs	Prog-early	Prsd
Study and support ELI long-term impact	Prog-early	Prsd
- 2 youth indicated that trouble in school started *long before* high school (one since Kindergarten; one since grade 7)	Prog-early	Espo
Schools need to be flexible to accommodate Aboriginal students; have a willingness to make changes; create success and continue with it. Schools are too conservative.	Prog-flex	Ayfw
Schools should recognize students' strengths and interests and work from these points: e.g. craft and art skills, sports, dancing	Prog-flex	Ayfw
Schools should be more flexible and students focussed	Prog-flex	Ayfw

Tailor courses to needs/competency based courses/aboriginal learning styles	Prog-flex	Ayps
Study other learning models more conducive to needs of kids rather than system	Prog-flex	Ayps
Overemphasis on academics inhibiting	Prog-flex	Ayps
Taylor students courses – if you know what you want to do, be able to take relative courses	Prog-flex	Ayps
Competency based education	Prog-flex	Ayps
Need to build on person's strengths	Prog-flex	Ayps
more freedom of choice to learn for students	Prog-flex	Bss
Broaden diploma requirements	Prog-flex	Cbea
"Learning Passport" which is a record of learning in one place Basic, Technical, Upgrading, Apprenticeship, University Many institutions able to grant high school credit SAIT, Bow Valley College, etc. Need to work broadly to determine "High School Diploma" requirements Same type/quality of learning must be recognized no matter where it is taken Break down artificial gates	Prog-flex	Cbea
Students who can be gainfully employed, contributors to society, etc. Acceptance of learning rates/styles Career planning to meet needs of specific groups; customized	Prog-flex	Cbea
Differentiated teaching/courses	Prog-flex	Cbea
Time to "paint the car a different color" Make High School fit student, not student to fit High School	Prog-flex	Cbea
Modify curriculum to meet student needs	Prog-flex	Cbep
Differentiated teaching style	Prog-flex	Cbep
Support in development and access of a program at post-secondary level	Prog-flex	Cbep
Need all types of schools: comprehensive to magnet	Prog-flex	Cbep
A.L. Career Development courses are on right track, but must be modifiable	Prog-flex	Cbep
Allowances for 'demonstrated/competency' learning; time for evaluation of this type of learning	Prog-flex	Cbep
All situations are not equal – i.e.: some kids need more space, time, support	Prog-flex	Cbep
Flexibility how curriculum delivered, School within school, Look at how students learn: Alta. Learning	Prog-flex	Cc
- Idea of "excellence" should be "doing your best and meeting your own objectives and your potential" – definition of excellence needs changing	Prog-flex	Cscn
- Why is it important to get a diploma by age 20? what is so wrong with getting it late? early leaving is thus not really a problem. the way school is structured *not* made for everyone.	Prog-flex	Cscn
- We've taken away some avenues – who is catering to the 32% who dropout?	Prog-flex	Cscn
- We need to promote empowerment and the critical skills of students	Prog-flex	Cscn
- We need to cater to student's specific abilities	Prog-flex	Cscn
- We should offer whatever route/subject that would make students *want* to continue, because their interests are being met	Prog-flex	Cscn
- The message given in the school system seems to be: go to university, whether you need it or not – that route is pushed by counselors	Prog-flex	Cscn
Hl: - the current model doesn't work, with a 32% dropout rate	Prog-flex	Cscn

Need to work with individual students support system Need to focus on students' successes, not their failures	Prog-flex	Epsm
Extend "Special Ed" to high school	Prog-flex	Epsm
selectively timetable students for facilitate more flexible contacts	Prog-flex	Epsm
Extended learning opportunity for class	Prog-flex	Epsm
Have interdisciplinary teaching tams	Prog-flex	Epsm
Need to be flexible on the entry points for coming back to school because in their lives they may need to leave school for a while	Prog-flex	Eps2
working can be a problem (conflicts with school)	Prog-flex	Eyoc
several youth mentioned being behind for grade level	Prog-flex	Eyoc
able to do school work at one's own pace at EYOC – seen as a big plus	Prog-flex	Eyoc
learning too many subjects in one day is a problem more flexibility in scheduling subjects is needed more time spent on one subject is needed	Prog-flex	Eyoc
curriculum too general – should be more tailor-made (i.e. different curriculum for different geographical locations)	Prog-flex	Eyoc
Second Chance or alternative schools are important options.	Prog-flex	Fmac
Need a transition safety valve to allow student that has been side tracked to catch up.	Prog-flex	Fmac
Making graduation requirements to stringent makes is more difficult.	Prog-flex	Fmac
Need to develop programs that teach to the individual rather than the masses. Adapt to student needs.	Prog-flex	Fmac
Adults are often not ready to come back until late 20s	Prog-flex	Llb
Requires intervention after assessment – do some interventions at the 1 – 6 level. Few interventions in 7 – 12, yet people experiencing greater problems	Prog-flex	Llb
Schools have university/post-secondary focus for 10% of students – don't encourage the other students, therefore, don't challenge/underestimate students	Prog-flex	Llb
Change in curriculum to actually meet the needs of kids	Prog-flex	Llb
For some students, system is too rigid.	Prog-flex	Leth
We struggle with people who won't think out of the box – who won't change the system – some traditional administrators, people in Edmonton too removed from what is happening to young people.	Prog-flex	Leth
Why can't school models be different? (i.e.: medical office, charter schools, businesses, etc.)	Prog-flex	Leth
We're not the same as Edmonton or larger urban centers – what works there may not work here.	Prog-flex	Leth
Flexible One on one Individualized education plan – student has ownership of this as well as teachers.	Prog-flex	Leth
We need a lot more and different kids of schools – traditional too. We need a lot of different kids of programs such as: High Integration Program PASS Assisted Student Support We need a lot of different kinds of schools tailored to personal circumstances, learning styles, motivation, etc.	Prog-flex	Leth
Program continuity E.g.: if student is in middle school but math is in Grade 4, they should work "where they are" and progress at level that's right for them *without embarrassing them.*	Prog-flex	Leth

- creative programming	Prog-flex	Norq
- special academic programming for adults with learning problems	Prog-flex	Norq
- learning enhancement (math and English in particular)	Prog-flex	Norq
- computer writing course	Prog-flex	Norq
Need to do a better job in ensuring special needs students understand how they can learn – career portfolios	Prog-flex	Nsd
- having different schools with different programs are not necessarily a strength	Prog-flex	Pyc
Need to be aware that 1 program will not meet needs of all – individual solutions to issues.	Prog-flex	Prsd
Flexibility and less structure so students can adjust and complete course requirements.	Prog-flex	Wrsd
You don't perform – 2 years in a row – military boot camp	Prog-flex	Wrsd
- schools have too much structure	Prog-flex	Espo
Hl: - current model of school has never been made/intended for 100% of students, nevertheless, we apply the model to all	Prog-ind	Cscn
- There needs to be a better interface between a student's abilities and interests	Prog-ind	Cscn
- IOP was not valued or respected in the school system	Prog-iop	Cscn
What needs to be done to allow for High School completion on time • Scrap 10P – "dumping ground" for learning barriered students, not a high school diploma, learns they have nothing, • Use IOP for what it was intended	Prog-iop	Llb
T: - IOP not being recognized - students get lost in the middle - on the one hand, they can't go on to post-secondary, yet they can't really go into the trade route - there seems to be little formal recognition of the program - has even heard teachers belittling IOP students	Prog-iop	Nlsd
IOP program needs review – concern over labelling of students with low expectations	Prog-iop	Nsd
Emphasis on broader skill set	Prog-multi	Cbea
Recognize different types of success/achievement	Prog-multi	Epsm
The things we are talking about, that we are passionate about are not what we are evaluated on – we are evaluated on PAT's Outcomes include exam scores and should include self worth, early school leavers, creativity, how you meet needs of student, life long learning BAN THE BUSINESS MODEL! Curriculum should be creative, not at all prescribed Teachers are teaching for exams, not for learning	Prog-multi	Leth
Need for programs to meet needs of all students in order to graduate (i.e.: 14/24 etc.)	Prog-multi	Prsd
Curriculum that meets needs/interests of students	Prog-multi	Prsd
Mult-based intelligencies	Prog-multi	Stjo
Staggered entry opportunities – not funded: Alta. Learning – Outreach – need different sites – Outreach/virtual schools – how are they funded?	Prog-outrch	Cc
Within Alta. Learning need to expand outreach program – Virtual learning – alternative H.S. – Not to take away ____ from district but to expand – how is funding really distributed? Dates? (Alta. Learning)	Prog-outrch	Cc

- current diversity in school system (outreach programs, etc.) is seen as positive	Prog-outrch	Norq
More funding for Outreach – beyond 400 credits, for all credits	Prog-outrch	Prsd
Simplify CEU funding; especially in Outreach	Prog-outrch	Prsd
Prior Learning Assessment needs at post secondary level	Prog-plar	Llb
- like PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment Recognition) initiative	Prog-plar	Norq
RAP and work experience	Prog-rap	Cbep
several lauded the school alternatives available, such as RAP and outreach	Prog-rap	Eyoc
- RAP is good and should be expanded - *Fresh Start* program should have RAP	Prog-rap	Espo
Sports are needed; some students don't have the opportunity at home or in the community	Prog-rel	Ayfw
Schools are too technology focused	Prog-rel	Ayfw
Traditional schooling not conducive to culture of native learning	Prog-rel	ayps
Struggling to get 100 credits in electives not interested in taking.	Prog-rel	Ayps
Stream of education is artificial – surface learning is not beneficial	Prog-rel	Ayps
Aboriginal people learn through seeing	Prog-rel	Ayps
Need more help with aboriginal learning styles. Traditional style of learning hold native students back	Prog-rel	Ayps
After school activities important to help students build a sense of belonging	Prog-rel	Bss
Relevant curriculum	Prog-rel	Cbea
Curriculum connected to life/experiences/needs	Prog-rel	Cbea
What does student want/fit with interests/value of education other than University	Prog-rel	Cbea
Include 'standards' that are valued beyond core course	Prog-rel	Cbep
but home schooling doesn't work if no one is at home to make you do the work	Prog-rel	Eyoc
Options – when fail core subjects, why should students be allowed to take options	Prog-rel	Llb
Classes not relevant – must be interesting, fun Commercials are interesting, upbeat Group assignments, interaction more important than "taking notes" Classes interesting because teacher is interesting Lectures remind kids too much of parents – nagging – this is tiring, boring, frustrating	Prog-rel	Leth
Communication and involving students input in the decision of the development of curricula materials.	Prog-rel	Stjo
Flexibility in time to complete a course	Prog-times	Cbea
Flexible timetables	Prog-times	Cbep
Need to look at infrastructure to address "campus" style: School district, Alta. Learning	Prog-times	Cc
schools start too early in the morning (should start at 9:00 or 9:30)	Prog-times	Eyoc
Schools should allow time outs if necessary Sometimes hold on – give nothing of value – time outs may be better	Prog-times	Llb
- time flexibility to meet student needs – courses when they can take them	Prog-times	Norq
T: - part-time options with support	Prog-times	Norq
- curriculum needs fine tuning in terms of scheduling	Prog-times	Nlsd
School hours – hours that meet the "growth stage" of students.	Prog-times	Prsd

- attendance - attendance policy is "a joke" — the rules don't work - the "zero tolerance" policy of some schools is a joke	Prog-times	Espo
Orientation into high school is needed	Prog-trans	Ayfw
Curriculum – 100 credits is a lot, stigmatism of taking 13 level courses – are too separate	Prog-trans	Ayps
Streamline transition from high school to post secondary	Prog-trans	Ayps
Looking at ways screening is done for post-secondary – needs to be more than High School courses	Prog-trans	Cbep
Stay in school transition programs – age 14 ½ to 15 ½: IOP profile; interest in vocational program	Prog-trans	Cbep
Targeting at risk students – from connector Jr. High to High School	Prog-trans	Cc
anecdotal evidence from others that many students are quitting in grade 10 – grade 9 is a tough year	Prog-trans	Cscn
students way of leaving and acceptance of direction set by Grade 9	Prog-trans	Epsm
Transition initiative is vital	Prog-trans	Epsm
Transition from grade 8 to 9 loses some students because they are not prepared for the independence of high school.	Prog-trans	Fmac
transitional skills between high school and post-secondary - need to begin as early as grade 7 to ease transition	Prog-trans	Hfsd

Dallas was certain that students experience school alienation at the junior high level.	Prog-trans	Hpsd
Post-secondary – better links and partnerships with high schools Currently alienation exists between 2 levels – bridges need to be built – need to learn from each other	Prog-trans	Llb
Colleges are getting out of High School upgrading (e.g.: LCC)	Prog-trans	Leth
- concept of high school as a preparation for post-secondary is hard to break - students are not being encouraged to explore non-university alternatives	Prog-trans	Nlsd
- grade 9 academic issues - students at the breaking point - need a better interface between grade 9 and high school	Prog-trans	Nlsd
- grade 9 - choices are too narrow	Prog-trans	Nlsd
Need to treat students as individuals and if the person is better served in an adult education model the transition supports should be there	Prog-trans	Nsd
Acceptance of "post-secondary" course completion for High School Diploma	Prog-trans	Prsd
Look at apprenticeship standards – ie Grade 9 – not accepted by trades but stays at Grade 9 – unacceptable standard By: Alta Learning	Prog-trans	Wrsd
Emotional supports	Sds-affect	Epsm
Teachers need to be evaluated for skill and effectiveness. Bad practices will stifle students.	Staff-acct	Fmac
Principal would like Alberta Learning to consider some alternatives in accountability and measurable outcomes that will reflect the school as a whole. There is more awareness of this school that uses a holistic approach and it is respected in the community. Basis on the student ratio the students get one on one interaction with the teacher compared to the Store Front school with a program that delivers correspondence courses with one staff member.	Staff-acct	bss
System for student to evaluate teacher – Report card	Staff-acct	Cc
- teachers need to do more explaining when they teach	Staff-acct	hfsd
Some teachers not "enthused"	Staff-acct	Leth
Teachers should be from a wide range of the community e.g: trades, etc. Not just those that graduated from a teaching program.	Staff-acct	Leth
Not all teachers can teach – i.e., communicate to students – need better evaluation	Staff-acct	Nsd
- teachers need to be more attentive	Staff-acct	Pyc
- teachers tell us what to do, and expect us to do it (without asking whether concepts are understood) - need better instructions / directions from teachers - teachers didn't teach properly — too much lecturing, not enough group discussion - there is no ability on the part of students to provide input - teachers did not meet student's needs - schools think it is "their way or no way" — there is no process to complain and provide input - schools are closed minded — don't realize that kids do things for a reason, and the smallest thing to a teacher can be the biggest thing to a student	Staff-acct	Espo
- good teachers use alternative teaching methods to explain concepts	Staff-acct	Espo
If there are more comments we will contact you. Thanks for coming and caring about our kids.	Staff-caring	ayfw

Teachers/administrators need to be more consistent, persistent and patient in dealing with students… especially those with challenges outside of the school	Staff-caring	Ayfw
schools need to be more understanding of problems/challenges being faced by students	Staff-caring	Bss
principals need to be more sensitive leaders they can set the tone and climate	Staff-caring	Bss
T/ principals should be more understanding of students having a hard time with family, money, abuse etc.	Staff-Caring	Bss
This is a welcoming school – what makes it welcoming?	Staff Caring	Bss
S/ teachers understand us, where we are coming from, cut slack but help us help ourselves.		
T/ mediation works well here – part of roles and responsibilities with your – understanding issues, trends etc. what is going on with youth. Mediation includes youth, youth worker, teacher talk it out as equals/ community members. Students get to hear how a teacher feels like being told to "fuck off"	Staff-caring	Bss
T/ staff are fully integrated with students – share meals etc.,	Staff-caring	Bss
Schools with a clear focus; schools within schools to limit size	Staff-caring	Cbea
Build a sense of community – place where you are known	Staff-caring	Cbep
Improved relationship building – teacher/student – need to understand students situation ie: working, child care at home: Teachers	Staff-caring	Cc
- says that a majority of teachers he knows are stressed, one of the reasons being because they don't have time to establish personal contact with students	staff-caring	cscn
In outreach: teachers called by first name; more personal.	Staff-caring	Epsm
Need to make personal connections with students	Staff-caring	Epsm
selecting appropriate staff NB	Staff-caring	Epsm
changing teacher attitude see themselves as subject teachers, not teachers of students	Staff-caring	Epsm
teacher sensitivity NB	Staff-caring	Epsm
Need to build positive expectations	Staff-caring	Epsm
Break away from teaching subjects Move toward teaching students	Staff-caring	Epsm
What makes a nice teacher? teachers who aren't "down your back" / not always "work, work, work" teachers who don't nag so much and are in a pleasant mood teachers who aren't controlling	Staff-caring	Eyoc
Counselor never seemed to care and seemed invisible	Staff-caring	Glsm
No-one asked why were leaving at point of leaving • Schools get too focused on academic • Disregard for student • Understanding that everyone learns differently	Staff-caring	Llb
Schools need to become a nurturing environment – everyone was involved – teachers, support groups, etc – not writing off kids – if disadvantaged in school, currently there is no-one to help you.	Staff-caring	Llb
Many kids "counseled" out – there is strong encouragement (coercion) to leave if they don't fit the system.	Staff-caring	Leth
Teacher advisor system – works well because teachers "connect" with students	Staff-caring	Leth
St - good positive attitude on part of staff staff offering emotional support	Staff-caring	Norq
We need caring teachers and measuring students attendance, marks and attitudes	Staff-caring	Nsd

- teachers who take ownership of school and students are the most effective	Staff-caring	Pyc
Teachers working to meet needs of students as individuals	Staff-caring	Prsd
Teachers need to use a holistic approach to in their program delivery and look at the health and wellness of the individual.	Staff-caring	Stjo
- schools do not provide kids a chance to get back in the system - one student tried to get into 8 different schools, but was unable to (schools didn't want to enroll student, and told him to go to a school that "can meet your needs")	Staff-caring	Espo
- one participant claimed her school doesn't know that she's on probation (even though they are aware) and that if her teachers knew, they would label her	Staff-caring	Espo
- teachers are not interested in your personal problems — they come to teach and that's all	Staff-caring	Espo
Need to recruit younger counselors	Staff-coord	Ayps
More holistic approach within schools – your student is my student	Staff-coord	Cbea
Need to look for structures that promote "seamlessness"	Staff-coord	Cbea
Need more cooperation/collaboration among those who deal with students; resource offices, social workers, school liaison workers. Sharing space/resources/expertise to meet needs of students	Staff-coord	Cbep
Need to build better linkages among support agencies, especially those providing financial benefit	Staff-coord	Epsm
One stop shopping for support services	Staff-coord	Epsm
Mental health challenges significant at the high school level	Staff-coord	Epsm
need better coordination of support services need to clearly identify organizations providing supports	Staff-coord	Epsm
Person who doesn't know, doesn't want to know – points out how all teachers need to have knowledge of learning barriers – teamwork is important – need to connect the academics and the people – knowledge	Staff-coord	Llb
Principals need to be "at the table"	Staff-coord	Leth
- good external relationships with outside agencies	Staff-coord	Norq
T: - better coordination with outside agencies (i.e. social services) - more work in community in terms of readiness, study skills	Staff-coord	Norq
T: - need reliable support network **S:** - AVC community encouraging more support in wider community	Staff-coord	norq
Need to more clearly identify individual students at riskness	Staff-diag	Epsm
We need to be more creative in dealing with kids at risk – more focus on pinpointing the assessment of the problem and then dealing with the kids.	Staff-diag	Eps2
kids get moved too quickly from one group (grade) to the next before they master the concepts at the lower grade level	Staff-diag	Eyoc
Programs and funding targeted to diagnosis of problems.	Staff-diag	Fmac
accurate assessment – need to develop better screening for students with learning barriers	Staff-diag	Llb
Ministerial enquiry: students with learning disabilities in Northern Lights system – haven't made a dent in problems after the assessments – faulty model being used	Staff-diag	Llb
Don't normally get info from Learning – cumulative record Few have documentation	Staff-diag	Llb
Need a "constructive" approach"	Staff-diag	Llb

T: - assessment service to target students more specifically - to determine what level they are actually at	Staff-diag	Norq
Individualized assessments (funding should be based on treatment) Use a variety of testing mechanisms to address the needs of the unique individual.	Staff-diag	Stjo
Don't make concessions because students are Aboriginal; don't stereotype	Staff-expct	Ayfw
Level of expectation of school toward aboriginal students – school/teachers don't expect aboriginal students to graduate. Therefore, inhibiting towards aboriginal students.	Staff-expct	Ayps
Glen felt that too much emphasis on academic achievers and not enough of the other students who are struggling. Too much emphasis is put on the Achievements tests. It is a determinant for students, and it sets them up for failure. There is too much emphasis on student competences that must be acquired.	Staff-expct	Hpsd
Taylor feels there are students who attend school everyday and work hard and are not recognized on their consistency.	Staff-expct	Hpsd
In 5th on 5th, we have fun but also high expectations – behaviorally and academically	Staff-expct	Leth
- excuses made are sometimes too easy - students *can* overcome barriers	Staff-expct	Nlsd
Pd for teachers, teacher training is needed about Aboriginal people	Staff-pd	Ayfw
Educate the educators	Staff-pd	Ayps
Teach cultural protocols/teach aboriginal/cultural history	Staff-pd	Ayps
To be effective, everyone needs to be involved: educators should have background in native studies to help native population	Staff-pd	Ayps
University level – teaching educators – paternalistic attitudes towards other cultures – perpetuates stereotypes, expectations	Staff-pd	Ayps
Teacher " secondment" to industry; or summer employment	Staff-pd	Cbea
Need to teach out teachers to not only have academic skills but interpersonal: ATA, Alta. Learning, Universities	Staff-pd	Cc
Need to address teacher burn out.	Staff-pd	Fmac
Faculty of Ed – not giving enough background on learning disabilities – need to give every teacher the understanding of learning disabilities – know interventions necessary to assist – sending kids to special ed classrooms destroys self-esteem	Staff-pd	Llb
Teachers need to have better education to learn how to deal with learning styles	Staff-pd	Llb
supports for cultural awareness and for teachers to be more sensitive to a multicultural group.	Staff-pd	Stjo
Changing methodologies are taking place in teacher training	Staff-pd	Wrsd
teachers don't seem to be open to suggestions for change students should get input into teacher performance according to some youth, students are not able to provide input it is a closed circle / teachers protect themselves and don't listen to input from students	Staff-power	Eyoc
Taylor felt the communication skills he has would help him in the work field. He stressed the school should focus on teaching basic skills that students can use once they leave school. He disagreed with school suspensions because it is just a holiday for students and the students feel it is not discipline. There needs to be a procedure that demonstrates teacher student relationship of respect.	Staff-power	Hpsd
Frustration breeds confrontation	Staff-power	Llb
- "zero tolerance" policies don't work - they are not enforced, and are not applied universally	Staff-power	Pyc
Schools should use/need action/techniques to resolve student issues/conflicts	Std-affect	Bss
Today many students are facing social issues that they can not over come by themselves.	Std-affect	Bss

Make students feel good about themselves	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Find out what makes students tick	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Peer support is needed	Stds-affect	Ayfw
A personal approach is needed where there is a personal relationship with the student	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Need to make high schools less alienating to students	Stds-affect	Ayfw
Time to heal – supports – time is less important under these circumstances	Stds-affect	Ayps
No cultural learning, resources – not taught to be proud of self	Stds-affect	Ayps
Reserve kids – shy, poor communication skills	Stds-affect	Ayps
Idea of monitoring/measuring emotional experience of school: Yes – especially since shootings	Stds-affect	Ayps
Athletics/sports – involvement in extra curricular activities can help – gain popularity, acceptance.	Stds-affect	Ayps
- we need to value all students, not just the ones who have a 90% average	stds-affect	cscn
attitudinal development critical	Stds-affect	Epsm
students drop out incrementally – course by course	Stds-affect	Epsm
Deduce intimidation of students by other students Students who are bullied will drop out of school and may become violent Reduce violence among students Power grabs/status important to at risk students	Stds-affect	Epsm
peer pressure is hard to resist – it's a barrier to attendance	Stds-affect	Eyoc
racism not as bad as it used to be people are more accepting these days	Stds-affect	Eyoc
the reason kids act up in school is because they can't do the work or find the classes boring	Stds-affect	Eyoc
extracurricular activities tying sports participation to grades is a good thing, but it should be tied to *effort* as opposed to *absolute performance* (i.e. as long as the student is trying to work in school)	Stds-affect	Eyoc
police presence in schools should be expanded there should be a crackdown on weapons in school bringing weapons to school is seen as cool (though many said it *wasn't)* no support for routine locker searches metal detectors would be good, as well as a "zero tolerance" policy	Stds-affect	Eyoc
simply expelling students won't work short term suspensions / detentions would be better	Stds-affect	Eyoc
dress is sometimes an issue there was a mixed reaction, though there was general acknowledgement that dress can act as an exclusionary tactic – while a standard dress code is not really favoured, students do see some benefits)	Stds-affect	Eyoc
Pregnancy is often seen as a badge of honor amongst teens.	Stds-affect	Fmac
More student input and involvement in school decisions/ student participation.	Stds-affect	Fmac
Kids need to have a sense of ownership.	Stds-affect	Fmac
Didn't like bus – would rather board out. Busing – too tiring	Stds-affect	Glsm
If board out, will not get lonely. Boarding homes can be good.	Stds-affect	Glsm
extracurricular activities viewed as positive by all the students - but distance can be an obstacle (for students who don't have transportation), and cost can sometimes be a barrier	Stds-affect	Hfsd

S: - both students cite a benefit to being in the Catholic system - more open, more caring, more accepting environment more sense of being **T:** - greater ability to teach values and ethics - does make a difference in school setting **T:** - worked in both systems had to be so careful about what to say, couldn't bring God into the conversation, etc / had a whole policy book on what you could not say or do - more able to teach to the whole person in the Catholic system	Stds-affect	Hfsd
Taylor and Dallas felt they really did not like school however felt they had to attend. Taylor felt what skills he learned in school would not help in the job field that he was interested in. One example is the mechanics or other trades. James said he liked school.	Stds-affect	Hpsd
Emphasis was on academics, not emotions Rather – "laughed at"/ put down Wanted to have some help but didn't	Stds-affect	Llb
Peer pressure can work both way – need to encourage better model	Stds-affect	Llb
"People knowing people" – right from newest student to president – encourage students to stay in school.	Stds-affect	Llb
"Learning barriers have to heal" – have to go through stages Adults have been very damaged by school system – if did work early enough then wouldn't have to "rehabilitate" Not just institutional response, but is societal response	Stds-affect	Llb
Pressure to "conform" in school (dress, attitude) difficult, makes me feel second class, inferior.	Stds-affect	Leth
Students get sense of responsibility	Stds-affect	Leth
Do our young people trust us? If teachers show respect for students, trust will occur.	Stds-affect	Leth
- attendance	Stds-affect	Norq
S: - too much pressure on teens – i.e. new math	Stds-affect	Norq
T: - life skills – would like to see a budgeting course as a *requirement* of *all* students	Stds-affect	Norq
- students undergoing enormous challenges just to survive	Stds-affect	Nlsd
- peer group pressure can be very negative	Stds-affect	Nlsd
- stress management, especially with exam coping skills, both in terms of achievement tests and diploma exams	Stds-affect	Nlsd
- leavers tend not to participate in extracurricular activities	Stds-affect	Nlsd
Need to involve students in decision making	Stds-affect	Nsd
Students may need more supports in the area of peer relationships	Stds-affect	Nsd
Students are not often asked how they feel about school	Stds-affect	Nsd
School uniforms might be a good idea to remove the competition around clothing	Stds-affect	Nsd
Should assess students attitudes regularly	Stds-affect	Nsd
- high school - dress is exclusionary!! – some support expressed for standard dress (i.e. school uniforms)	Stds-affect	Pyc
Premature leavers are shadows of learning disabilities.	Stds-affect	Stjo
- non-school factors as barriers - peer pressure — friends tell them not to go to school (because it's a waste of time) - gang activity — can be a barrier to school attendance	Stds-affect	Espo
- low self-esteem can prevent kids from attending	Stds-affect	Espo
- one would not talk to a counselor; it's "like seeing a psychologist" (indicating that there is a stigma attached to seeing counselors)	Stds-affect	Espo

- kids are bored with school - schools need to be more fun / schools take themselves too seriously	Stds-affect	Espo
Tracking for transitions; basic & post-secondary working together	Stds-age	Cbea
Flex time and age limits	Stds-age	Cbep
How do we keep kids who may not be quite finished at 19 – flexibility in funding	Stds-age	Cc
Sometimes students need to leave for awhile and welcome to come back – opportunities	Stds-age	Cc
Need to change the picture of school – life long approach - provide more formalized way of out of school learning – out of school	Stds-age	Cc
we need to change definition of "adult student" in the *school act*, whereby funding is cut off after a certain age	Stds-age	Cscn
Need to reconsider 16 years of age as legal school leaving age	Stds-age	Epsm
it should be easier for kids to get back into the public school system there should be more options for 19-20 year olds	Stds-age	Eyoc
No funding if you're not 19 on the first day of school Expensive for kids Some kids are not ready	Stds-age	Leth
Guidance to career requirement that is easy to use	Stds-career	Cbea
Elementary teachers need to be "career aware"	Stds-career	Cbea
Career development – knowledge of what is out there	Stds-career	Cbep
Help students build plans for their future	Stds-career	Epsm
Many kids are going through school without any career planning more guidance counselors are needed, but comments also made to the effect that counselors are not seen as useful – friends are more important in terms of confiding personal problems to (some feel that counselors can't help you) it is not just kids who don't know what they want to do (perhaps implying that kids are unfairly criticized for not having clear career plans) more career days, and more variety (not the same employers over and over)	Stds-career	Eyoc
The economy has an effect on the hunger of kids. Kids need to see the long term benefits of staying in school.	Stds-career	Fmac
Joyce would like to see students write a personality test for career planning at the junior high level.	Stds-career	Hpsd
Trevor: discussed in NWT the career planning was set up for the student to spend 1 week on choice of career.	Stds-career	Hpsd
Russ said they are considering a Career Porforlio for grade 7 students.	Stds-career	Hpsd
People – missing the boat who could contribute to society because they can't offer the "piece of paper"	Stds-career	Llb
- goal setting and goal direction are seen as key characteristic of successful students	Stds-career	Nlsd
Goal setting/career planning at early age Opportunities to find out about careers	Stds-career	Prsd
Parent education: assistance with issues/career setting	Stds-career	Prsd
give students opportunities to do life skill /career planning.	Stds-career	Stjo
- schools don't do enough career planning and don't teach you how to live	Stds-career	Espo
Drugs in high school, now in grade school	Stds-drugs	Ayps
Need drug awareness program in high school, like drunk driving awareness program	Stds-drugs	Ayps
New grade 10s tend to positive: drugs a major problem, rebel against teachers	Stds-drugs	Epsm

need to more effectively address drug use not sure what can be done use pictures of what can happen to you after taking drugs "shock therapy"	Stds-drugs	Epsm
drug use is a problem / barrier to school attendance drugs too easy to get can't control drug use / drugs will always be easy to obtain, and schools can't control drug access smoking prohibitions can't be enforced	Stds-drugs	Eyoc
Fort Mc has many families with high disposable incomes. Drugs at home are not uncommon.	Stds-drugs	Fmac
major problems with alcohol, drugs – big temptations trying to fit in	Stds-drugs	Fma2
Dropped out because always on drugs and doing alcohol. Had spiritual awakening and cleaned up. Offered a job as a counselor. Going to Concordia. Doing night courses and plans on going to Mt. Royal. Early in life, felt Gift Lake was too small and wanted more, drugs was the answer. Did not listen when told of ability	Stds-drugs	Glsm
T: - drug use doesn't seem to be an issue	Stds-drugs	Hfsd
middle school: - safety concerns - drug and alcohol problems exist	Stds-drugs	Nlsd
- drug use - it is very easy to get drugs in school — schools cannot prevent this - more preventive measures by schools needed (e.g., in-services)	Stds-drugs	Pyc
- drug use is barrier	Stds-drugs	Espo
Psychological assessment tools need to be changed – not geared toward culture – i.e., in Native Culture, seeing spirits is gifted/spiritual path, not a psychosis.	Stds-label	Ayps
Issue: does labeling traumatize leavers: Implication PSL Labeling of students, teachers, courses	Stds-label	Epsm
labeling of youth seen as a problem, but at the same time, labeling is not an excuse (i.e. you shouldn't use labeling as an excuse for not doing well in school)	Stds-label	Eyoc
Labelling kids, with behavioural barriers – lowers self esteem	Stds-label	Llb
High School kids have started to leave "in their heads" as far back as Elementary – labeling	Stds-label	Leth
- being told too early (i.e. grade 8) that you aren't of "university" caliber	Stds-label	Norq
- dissatisfaction expressed with counseling - perception of labeling and streaming for lower achieving students - perhaps greater communication needed instead	Stds-label	Nlsd
Always have a reason for what students do in class.	Stds-self	Ayfw
Support to help children understand who they are, likes, dislikes, abilities, interest, ways they learn best – needs to be done in non-evaluative type manner	Stds-self	Cbep
Students need to be encouraged to set their own goals	Stds-self	Epsm
giving students "social passes" is ineffective we are not kidding them students see themselves as failures	Stds-self	Epsm
Joyce disagrees with students who are achieving below grade level are Pushed on to the next grade. This can be very frustrating for a student who has not covered all the content and expected to move on. Students need to know what level they are working at in each grade	Stds-self	Hpsd
Taylor and Dallas felt regardless of how poor they achieved in their tests they understood that they would go on to the next grade.	Stds-self	Hpsd

Trying to solve problems of graduates from high school who are functioning at Grade 7 – 9 level	Stds-self	Llb
Repeating courses under SDG not allowed – schools have awarded credit in programs that student testing does not give credence to	Stds-self	Llb
Need to have competency based subjects Person already has credits in program and now need to go back is demoralizing	Stds-self	Llb
System failed – kids pushed through school – teach to test	Stds-self	Llb
Need to gain understanding of strengths to pursue career goals.	Stds-self	llb
- English and reading skills are low and need improvement - often, students do not know what's going on in school because they haven't been given the foundational skills	Stds-self	Nlsd
- students passed on in lower grades is a detriment	Stds-self	Nlsd
Truth in criterion referenced testing and communicating accurately to parents and students	Stds-self	Nsd
Use university students to assist in schools	Stds-sups	Ayfw
Lack of counseling	Stds-sups	Ayps
Need native counselors in schools	Stds-sups	Ayps
Lack of aboriginal support in mainstream high school	Stds-sups	Ayps
Not enough native school counselors for daily support/little native liaison. Should be one counselor for every 100 students	Stds-sups	Ayps
TERA – school for young mothers – not soon enough	Stds-sups	Ayps
Provide support for students who have kids – day care at school, special classes for young parents, group support	Stds-sups	Ayps
Daycare for single teenage parents	Stds-sups	Cbep
PSLs need an integrated support system Medical personnel Legal aid Social workers Bank managers "One stop shopping"	Stds-sups	Epsm
group homes inadequately staffed and not able to save at risk population	Stds-sups	Epsm
Glen strongly felt that there be more supports available for students afterschool. He suggested that there be transportation available for students who live out of town. In Kinuso there is over 50% of the students who are bused in. Students would have access to the computers that are available in the school and teachers can be available to give one on one support.	Stds-sups	Hpsd
Returning to school is not easy – family responsibilities	Stds-sups	Llb
Psychologist only every 6 moths, does not give adequate support Didn't have supports in place to help students who have learning disabilities – is it don't have the tests or they just don't take the time.	Stds-sups	Llb
Also need to look at poverty – put variables in context. "Poverty" – all about discouragement, giving up Need to give hope for the future.	Stds-sups	Llb
- universal day care – this is an *ideal*	Stds-sups	Norq
More summer programs Tutoring year round e.g., reading in applied situations	Stds-sups	Nsd
Need an institute where native kids are all taught in one school or in a region A residential school in the North	Stds-sups	Nsd

Need a study of optimal boarding home contexts where boarding is the best option for a group of students - Including levels of support e.g., Conlkin home run by a community organization	Stds-sups	Nsd
Ways to deal with health issues	Stds-sups	Prsd
Money to track students; follow up	Stds-track	Cbea
T: - show students reasons for staying, tangibles as well as intangibles **T:** - more follow-up / consultation needed	Stds-track	Norq
Need to monitor and follow up students	Stds-track	Nsd
Need to ensure tracking system Takes into consideration that High School courses taken in college, etc. are "counted" Get real data before focusing on a problem that may not be real.	Stds-track	Prsd
Certificate School leaving Certificate Registered formally for 10 years By: Alta. Learning	Stds-track	wrsd
Perceived employment opportunities are potential barriers. "look at joe, he's making $xx and he didn't finish."	Stds-work	Fmac
The employers inability to attract full time employees and the tendency to stretch the hours of part time employees to fill the gap.	Stds-work	Fmac
- all 3 participants mentioned it is still easy to get a job without a high school diploma	Stds-work	Espo
- there was wide agreement that a good economy increases high school leaving (i.e. high school in Bonnyville used to literally empty when the economy was good – hl)	stds-work loads	cscn

APPENDIX E – RESOURCE PANEL PARTICIPANTS

1. Benjamin Levin – author of "Dealing with Dropouts in Canadian Education."

2. Bob Fisk – author of "Urban School Dropouts: A Case Study."

3. Doug McNally – CEO, Edmonton Community Foundation.

4. Graham Lowe and Harvey Krahn – have completed extensive research on school to work transitions in Alberta.

5. Lewis Cardinal, Director and Coordinator, Office of Native Student Services, University of Alberta.

6. Steve Ramsanker – Safe and Caring schools special project – Alberta Learning.

7. Terry Fortin, Project Leader, Native Education Project, Alberta Learning.

8. Edmonton Public Schools Panel
    - Karen Bardy
    - Gloria Chalmers
    - Anne Mulgrew
    - Carol Suddards
    - Simon van der Valk
    - Linda Wiens

9. Edmonton Public Schools' Aboriginal Education Staff
    - Donna Leask
    - Edith Dalla Costa
    - Rosalie Cardinal
    - Pauline L'Hirondelle
    - Marion Stone

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. The School Leavers Survey: Summary
1993 of Alberta Results, Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, et.al. You Can Help – A School Dropout
1994 Information Package, Edmonton, Alberta.

Alexander, Karl L., Doris R Entwisle, and Carrie S. Horsey. "From First Grade Forward: Early
1997 Foundations of High School Dropout." Sociology of Education, v.70, no. 2.
April. p. 87-107.

Barrington, Byron L. and Bryan Hendricks. "Differentiating Characteristics of High School
1989 Graduates, Dropouts, and Nongraduates," Journal of Educational Research, v. 82, no. 6,
p. 309-319).

Bloom, Michael. "Profiles of Partnerships: Business-Education Partnerships That Enhance Student
1991 Retention." Ottawa, Conference Board of Canada.

Britt, Patricia M. Student Voices: Students' Perceptions of Factors Placing Them at Risk of
1995 Dropping Out of School.

Conference Board of Canada. Performance and Potential – 2000-2001.
2000 Ottawa.

Dorn, Sherman. Creating the Dropout – An Institutional and Social History of School Failure.
1996 Praeger, Westport, Connecticut.

Fisk, Bob. Urban School Dropouts: A Case Study. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University
1994 of Alberta. Edmonton, Alberta.

Franklin, Cynthia and Calvin L. Streeter. "Assessment of Middle Class Youth at Risk to Dropout
1995 Psychological and Family Correlates." Children and Youth Services Review, v. 17,
no. 3, p. 433-448.

Galt, Virginia. "Canadians Pursuing Higher Education in Record Numbers," Education Reporter
2000 February 22.

Gilbert, Sid, et.al. Leaving School: Results from a national survey comparing school leavers and
1993 high school graduates 18 to 20 years of age. Human Resources Development Canada.

Grekol, Nick. Retention Study Project: Interim Report. Calgary Board of Education.
1991 Calgary, Alberta.

Hyle, Adrienne, et. al. School Dropouts: What Agenda Do Administrators See for Dealing with
1991 the Problem? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational
Research Association (Chicago, IL.).

Karp, Ellen. The Drop-Out Phenomenon in Ontario Secondary Schools: A Report to the
1988 Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts.
Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto.

Lawton, Stephen B., et. al. Student Retention and Transition in Ontario High Schools: Policies
1988 Practices and Prospects. Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto.

Levin, Benjamin. "Dealing with Dropouts in Canadian Education." Curriculum Inquiry, v. 22,
1992 no. 3 p. 257-270.

Lowe, Graham S., Harvey Krahn and Jeff Bowlby. Alberta High School Graduate Survey: Report of
1996 Research Findings. Alberta Education, Edmonton.

Makokis, Patricia. An Insider's Perspective: The Dropout Challenge For Canada's First Nations
2000 Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of San Diego.

McPartland, James M. "Dropout Prevention in Theory and Practice." Paper commissioned for
1993 At-Risk Evaluation.

Mirochnik, Denise, and Edward J McCaul. Public School Dropouts: A Contextual Approach.
1990 Occasional Paper Series No. 5

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Education at a Glance – OECD
1998 Indicators. Paris.

Parker, Palmer J. To Know as we are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey. Harper-Collins
1993 Publishers, New York.

Radwanski, George. Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts.
1987 Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto.

Romanik, Dale G. and Christine A. Blazer. Reasons for Dropping Out of School and Assessment
1990 of Risk Factors: A Comparison of Dropouts, 'At Risk,' and 'Regular' Students.

Tanner, Julian, Harvey Krahn and Timothy Hartnagel. Fractured Transitions from School to
1995 Work - Revisiting the Dropout Problem. Oxford University Press, Toronto.

United States Department of Education. Reaching the Goals – Goal 2: High School Completion
1994 Washington, D.C.

Welch, Gordon. High School Completion Rates – Paper prepared for Alberta Education,
1997 Curriculum Standards Branch, Edmonton.

Williams, Bob. "Toward a Sensible School-to-Work System," Education Canada, Vol. 40, No.2.
2000